MY AIN LADDIE

DAVID DORLEY

To Bill Walker

John Meadowcroft

Nov. 20/71

Every good wish

Edward Meadowcroft

MY AIN LADDIE

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EDITED BY

DAVID DORLEY

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INTRODUCTION

AS LADD'S literary executor, his personal writings and manuscripts naturally came into my possession.

Among these, none reveals more intimately the inner workings and struggles of his soul than the correspondence that passed between him and Claire, his faithful friend and fiancée, the lodestar of his career.

Ladd dearly cherished these epistles. They were kept reverently apart from his other writings, and showed unmistakable signs of having been read again and again — with what profit to his soul I leave to the reader to judge.

To obtain the letters Ladd had written Claire was a more difficult task. Obviously she considered it as approaching a desecration to share them with others; yet finally I succeeded. She turned them over to me along with a short sketch of her impressions of Ladd when first she met him.

What more natural than for me to weave these letters into a tale, and, omitting all names, present it to to you for the sake of the dear, dead past — for the sake of her "Ain Laddie."

David Dorley.

October 19, 1919.

SKETCH OF "THE MAN"

By

ONE WHO WOULD THINK SHE KNEW
HIM IF SHE DIDN'T KNOW BETTER

WHEN he first swung into view a tall, boyish figure, he caught my attention much as a ray of light through the blind catches the attention of a child. And I wondered in a vague sort of way if life's shadow had ever touched him. Looking upward from the shadows, this air of buoyant youth and happiness aroused my resentment. The thought came to me that if any darkness should fall across his path, this almost aggressive contentment with the world and all it contained would not survive.

Well, that was months ago; and I have since come to know that his cheerfulness was not so much a careless acceptance of the world's smiles, as it was a courageous cheerfulness of principle which could "meet with triumph or disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same."

"Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re" — that is he. A combination of Irish brilliancy, amiability and adaptability, with Scotch gravity and determination; and somewhere in the background a bit of true British hauteur and reserve — that well-bred barrier beyond which none may penetrate.

The character is simple and extremely transparent — just about as transparent as the Great Wall of China.

Did you ever tackle a problem, in geometry for instance, and after casually running it through and scribbling your statement on paper, say to yourself: "How perfectly easy!" then all at once find yourself puzzled, and then more puzzled, until you ended by owning that you were unexpectedly and disconcertingly stuck? Just how it happened you could not tell; but the fact remained, you were stuck.

Perhaps it is because he has the art of camouflage developed to the *n*th power. Just about the time you have managed to convince yourself that he really is something or other, you suddenly discover that he isn't. Not that he lacks genuineness — oh, never that! but rather that no one is quite worth — at least to him — the sharing of his genuineness.

I often think that should he have known one whom he liked well enough to reveal himself to, a totally different person than the one we, casual acquaintances, are permitted to know would stand disclosed to view.

Should you happen in a moment of imbecility to ask him for a candid and unvarnished opinion on any but the most commonplace and immaterial subject, like the weather, the crops, or the real cause of the Great War, he will look at you with the frankest, most confidential gaze, and reply something after this fashion: "Well, since there exists a difference of opinion as to whether Mars is inhabited or not, you may, if you like, believe that the moon is or is not made of green cheese."

Or else in more weighty matters, if you corner him with tears in your eyes, and beseech him in accents of life and death to tell you whether he honestly prefers pink or blue, he will smile charmingly — that's the word — and reply: "Yes."

His is a character that, like a mirror, presents a polished surface in which you see reflected yourself, or anyone in the vicinity: while of what really lies beneath the surface you see little and you know still less. Of the possibilities and potentialities you may know very much.

Truth, courage, high honor, and all that sort of thing are matters of "noblesse oblige." You don't give him any credit for possessing these commendable traits, because he cannot help manifesting them on every occasion. Therefore, take these for granted and let them pass.

Here is another trait — or shall we say gift? — that of impressing each one of his vast circle of friends and acquaintances with the idea that she is in some way the object of his special solicitude — that her welfare lies a bit nearer his heart than that of the others. Often, when they can find a sympathetic listener, they will pour forth with soulful look something like this:

"Yes, you know he was so worried about me. He tells me I ought not try to do so much, but you know." Or like this:

"Oh, I've always wanted to be a nurse, but he just gets wild when I speak of it; so I'll have to give that up. . . ." Or perchance like this:

"Oh, I don't know how I should have gotten on if he had not thought so much of me . . ." (mental reserva-

tion understood — "To the exclusion of the less favored"). And so on "ad infinitum."

And the "one who thinks she knows better" smiles to herself, and recalls the hero or demigod of the Greeks of old, who was named Hercules. He was always courageous and always strong; and he walked through life doing good wherever he saw any good to be done. An English poet says of him, "He held his life out lightly on his hand for any man to take."

So does our "man" hold his life lightly to be given bit by bit to anyone who has need of him. But some of our set do not understand; they fancy he is exclusively for them, not realizing that he is a cosmopolitan, that the whole world is his home and his field of labor.

I think it rather amuses him to be made a fuss over; but to be canonized — that is different. For in proportion as he is worthy he naturally feels far otherwise. And the sense of so vast a discrepancy between what he considers his havings and his deservings, produces a strangely saddening effect; yet ends by making him determined to shorten the distance between what he is and what he thinks he ought to be. This is the finest trait in his character. One may expect great things of a person not too well contented with himself.

CLAIRE

The Oaks, Long Island.

MY AIN LADDIE

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

Sunset Cottage, Bear Paw Mountains
May 16, 1918

My dear Claire,

Can you picture me on the veranda of a little cottage, far up in the Bear Paw Mountains, forty miles from the nearest post office? Don't be startled! I know that you will find it rather difficult to place me in such pastoral surroundings — me, the ardent lover of crowded thoroughfares, and the mad, gay life of the city. It is true, however; your oft-repeated words of warning have had their effect, and I am now a voluntary exile. Silently — like the proverbial Arab — I folded my tent (pitched for a number of years on the Great White Way), and came West. I trust it is not too late.

Speaking of "pastoral surroundings," the couple I am staying with own a large sheep ranch and are "pastors" in the literal sense of the word. Wish I could exactly depict to you what a charming couple they are! Both are Scotch. The husband, a rather short, hard-working, honest fellow; the wife, a tall, happy woman, with a heart of pure gold. She finished training as a nurse previous to her marriage; and showers every possible

attention on me. I have a comfortable bed on the veranda, which I have occupied almost constantly since my advent: and one faithful companion — a large, Maltese cat, answering to the name of Rory.

Shall I be frank? We promised to have no secrets. Well, I am very, very lonesome. On my arrival here, the change from my former position was so radical that my senses were numbed — I did not seem to feel anything. Now I yearn for the old haunts, old associates, old mother, old you. Not that you are old as far as years are numbered, but I like to give that title to those I reverence and hold dear. Oftentimes I catch myself speaking in this manner of those characters I love in fiction. I talk of "old" Tom Newcome, of "old" Scrooge. Somehow the word rings true. Don't you think so? It connotes reliability; one on whom we may depend — you.

Nurse just arrived with my supper, and bids me put away the writing tablet for the rest of the evening.

Good night!

May 17, 1918.

When you read the above (which may not be for some time; since we post and receive mail about once every six weeks up here), I suppose you will condemn me for not being brave. Pal, dear, it is not a question of bravery in this case. You know I am determined to do all in my power to regain health and strength; yet that resolve does not exclude my feeling this separation. One

is not necessarily less brave because he keenly feels the difficulties of the task he has set himself to perform. I do not believe in lying, in calling a hard proposition easy. No, this trial of mine or, rather, of ours (since you are generously bearing it with me) is hard. It is hard in the prime of life to give up practically everything — home, friends, aspirations; to be obliged, like the lepers of old, to go forth and wander in the desert places — the desert places where no flower blooms, and one thirsts and pants for the things he cannot have.

Of course, I have not admitted this weakness to others. With you I feel that I am not obliged to keep up appearances — you understand. Even mother does not yet know the whole truth; and I trust she never will — until the time comes. The day I left, she appeared more than usually worried: so I laughingly told her at the station that my sojourn would be a short one; that I was only run down and soon would be home with her once more. But you and I know better, Pal. We know that this "scout" may never find the home trail again, that he may be lost on the Divide.

I feel better for having "fessed up" to you. This readjustment of conditions is terrible. I am impatient, and at times even rebellious. Pardon, dear Pal, if in the days to come, I lean rather heavily upon your brave, little shoulders. I am utterly exhausted, spiritually and physically, and filled with a sense of entire abandonment, like a shipwrecked sailor cast up by the sea on an uninhabited island. So, Claire, Claire! do not desert me in this crisis; for, though physically frail, you are morally

able to support ten like me, and I need your assistance, oh, so much!

God love you, as the Irish say.

May 19, 1918.

My efforts of the last few days in writing to you proved too much, and caused quite a relapse in my condition. Monday was a wretched day for me, and my temperature did not improve with the coming of evening — I tossed and tossed with fever during the whole night. Next morning I did not care whether school kept or not.

Naturally Mrs. McDonnell became rather provoked because of my inability to take the accustomed milk and eggs for breakfast. She scolded for a while and finally said:

"There is no choice — you must swallow your eggs or die!"

In reply, I asked: "Did you ever hear the story of your namesake, Angus McDonnell?"

"No!" rather curtly.

"Well," I continued, "Angus went one day to see an oculist about his eyes. After a thorough examination, the doctor said, 'McDonnell, it's like this — you either have to stop the whiskey or lose your eyesight, and you must choose.'

" 'Ah, weel, doctor,' replied the old Scotsman, 'I'm an auld mon, noo, an' I was thinkin' I hae seen aboot everything worth seein'!' "

Her hearty laugh rang clear; and, perceiving she was somewhat mollified, I took advantage of her good humor and added:

"Nurse, don't be angry with me. I am in very much the same frame of mind as our friend Angus, this morning."

However, before leaving me to go about her work, she exacted a promise that I would do all in my power to avoid a like condition in the future. This I readily gave.

So, because my strength at present does not permit me to pen more than a stray thought or two at a time, I have resolved that these lines shall be more in the nature of a diary than of a letter — something I may not feel obliged to finish, but may pick up or cast aside as the inclination prompts me.

What shall we call this "opus magnum," Pal? How do you like, "Reveries of a Lunger"? I am afraid that word, lunger, would prove my undoing were I to write for publication, and not for your eyes alone. In our modern civilization a rather rigid rule prevails of shunning not only one infected with tuberculosis, but even the name itself. To speak of this particular disease — except perhaps in medical circles — is not considered good form. It makes one's hearers, though outwardly they smile benignly upon you and appear tremendously interested in your subject — it makes them shudder at heart. Imperceptibly they straighten up, draw a deep breath (a sure preventive against all attack), and, incidentally, de-

termine to change the conversation at the first opportunity.

Then again, that word reveries does not not seem to fit either. A reverie, to me, always connotes two distinct objects: a cheery, open fireplace, with blazing logs within; and a well-filled pipe as companion of the idle hours. Both of these comforts are denied me under present conditions. I am obliged to live out of doors, and forget that there ever existed such a potent soother of one's sorrows as the fragrant weed. Nevertheless — unless you fancy another title — "Reveries of a Lunger" it shall be. "Quod scripsi, scripsi." What I have written remains.

As ever,
Ladd.

P.S. Good news! Nurse McDonnell just came in to say that John, her husband, would leave tomorrow for Chicago. He is shipping a few cars of sheep, and will accompany them to their destination, returning in about three weeks. I am sending these notes with him. If he mails them on his arrival in Havre, I may have a reply from you by the time he returns again to the Bear Paw. Please do not fail me.

L.

May 29, 1918.

The battle rages, Pal, or is it the fever? We have turned on the enemy, and are holding our ground. Now

let us talk of something more cheerful; for I am beginning to realize that I have been very selfish, that I and my woes have occupied the stage entirely too long.

Apropos of the above, I recall a rather pithy saying from one of Kipling's sea stories. The scene is laid on board a merchantman bound for England; and the author pictures quite vividly a number of rough, old tars watching the antics of a caged monkey. The animal keeps up a continual chatter, and appears bent on attracting as much attention as possible. Finally one weather-beaten sea-dog takes the pipe from his mouth; and turning to his companions, points to the cage and sagely remarks: "Too much of the Ego, and too little of the Cosmos!"

That sailor was somewhat of a natural philosopher —he was able to read below the surface: but he forgot to add that it was because the animal was in captivity that he was self-centered. In all probability, had the monkey been in his natural surroundings, in the jungle, he would have been thinking of something other than himself. It was confinement that emphasized the Ego.

Now, it seems to me that, for many years past, I have been in very much the same position as that captive animal. Though living in the metropolis, I have been as closely confined by unnatural surroundings, false criteria of conduct, as the monkey by his iron cage. As a matter of course, then, my Ego has become abnormally developed. This I perceive in the few lines I wrote shortly after my arrival here. Nothing but I and me recurring every little while. Honestly, were it not for our mutual

promise, nothing would remain but torn-up, scattered scraps of paper.

But the spirit of the mountains, the spirit of the pines, the spirit of the broad, wind-swept plains in the dim distance — these are hovering about me, permeating my very being, fashioning the man you knew in broader, nobler lines.

One cannot long remain selfish under such influences, or rather under such influence, for the lesson nature teaches is ever the same — generosity. "Give, and it shall be given to you." These are the words she never tires of dinning into our untuned ears.

When I awoke this morning, from the poplar tree that overshadows my veranda, a brave-hearted phoebe favored me with a song; while the breezes brought me a gift from the pine trees west of Sunset Cottage, and oh, thank Heaven! it was not doled out as the doctor's prescription. I just filled and refilled every air cell in my lungs, until a bright ray of light coming over my shoulder distracted me. It was the old sun. Even he had not forgotten "the pilgrim," but was bringing his substance of warmth and good cheer to lay at my feet. And Beaver Creek (a madcap stream that rushes pell-mell down the mountainside, not over fifty yards from the house) well, he hardly waited long enough to mumble a hurried "Good morning!" so eager was he to reach the town on the prairies below, and, incidentally, to assist some dry-land farmers he would pass on the way. Who was it wrote the following, "To a Mountain

Stream"? The author could certainly not have given a better description of Beaver Creek.

"Oh, he tumbles adown, past the little gray town,
And sings a bright song on the way.
On meadows and woods, he gives of his goods,
Like a prodigal, here for a day.
He asks no returns for the wages he earns,
Yet each blade on the soft, dewy lea,
Begs a blessing of love to fall from above
On the traveler who goes to sea.

"Oh, gay little stream! I have caught from thy gleam
How nobly and truly to live.
I must journey along in the lilt of a song,
And gladly and freely to give.
Nor ask on the way for guerdon or pay,
Save the blessings men shower on me,
Till I hear the deep lave of the broad, ocean wave,
And the River at last meets the Sea."

"Those horrid mountains!" I hear you say. "They are making Laddie more and more egotistical. He's as bad as Mrs. Poyser's bantam cock, who fancied the sun got up every morning to hear him crow."

No indeed! I'm not more egotistical. I'm just awakening to the spirit of generosity, to the spirit of giving that pervades all nature. And, Claire, I am becoming more trustful.

"As weak, yet as trustful as ever
For the whole year round I see
All the wonders of faithful nature
Still worked for the love of me."

I do hope John McDonnell will bring me a letter from you. He ought to return within a few days, so Mrs. McD. tells me. Adios! The rebellious feeling is fast disappearing.

On board H. M. S. Steamer chair.

June 10, 1918.

A rather dramatic incident occurred to me the day I arrived in Havre: and, as far as I recall, I have not mentioned it to you. I had just been assisted down the Pullman steps, and was giving directions to the porter relative to the disposal of my baggage, when a grimy individual crept out from underneath the very car I had been traveling in. For the fraction of a second he looked stealthily about, as if fearing detection; then he walked rapidly away. In that brief space, I recognized the tramp — it was Jack Carter, valedictorian of our class — the fellow I had often spoken to you about, who came from behind and ended by making such a fine record in my last year. The porter must have noticed my watching the stranger, for he quickly dropped my valises, and started in pursuit of Jack. Realizing that the negro meant to have our friend arrested, I decided upon a ruse. As the colored man returned with his prisoner, stepping up to the two, I extended my hand to Jack and said "Old fellow, what would your millionaire father say if he knew that you were roaming around the country like a tramp? and all for the sake of gathering a little experience!"

Claire, dear, I cannot just decide which of the two — Jack or the porter — showed the more astonishment. The negro's manner immediately changed; he was more obsequious to Jack than to me, who had given him five dollars but a few moments before. As to Jack, it was some time before he recognized me on account of my altered appearance; at last, after a long, searching look, he sought my hand in a vise-like grip and said:

"How d'ye! Ladd, how d'ye!"

The simple words rang true; for Jack was never more in need of a friend than at that moment: while I, an exile, was happy too in meeting one from the homeland — one, who understood.

We talked far into the night; and the following morning, just before parting to continue my journey into the Bear Paw, I drew him aside, and slipped some money into his hand. He accepted it gratefully, and I, somewhat anxious about his future, questioned:

"Are you broke, Jack?"

"No! Ladd," he answered, "I'm not broke, but badly bent." These were his last words.

Today, I fear Mrs. McDonnell fancies I, too, am "badly bent" and on the verge of being broke; for, though allowing me to sit on a steamer chair on the veranda, she has, nevertheless, wrapped me about like one of those Egyptian mummies that are often seen in museums.

The day is a glorious one, Pal! A soft, mild wind blows from the West — a chinook, men call it out here;

and the far-off Rockies are dreaming in the afternoon sun.

Somehow I cannot forget that parting with Jack. His words still haunt me like a fever dream. "Not broke, but badly bent!" — that's my case. Not only physically but morally I'm "badly bent."

In childhood, I remember going up sometimes to the attic on an exploring trip. On one particular day I was successful in forcing a door that had long resisted my efforts. I peeped cautiously in. The shutters were drawn; the windows all closed; a damp, musty odor pervaded the whole room. There were cobwebs everywhere, and the dust of years, like a gray mantle, covered furniture and floor. To conquer my fear, I opened the door a little wider. It creaked on its hinges, and a mouse scuttled across the open toward an old bureau. That was sufficient for me; I quickly withdrew.

The appearance of that room remains indelibly imprinted on my memory, and, in a way, it best describes to you my spiritual condition in the past.

Since coming here, however, some fairy godmother has worked a miracle. The shutters are thrown back, the windows are wide open, and God's bright sunshine and God's pure air are mine once more. And strange as it may seem, though I now see the dust, the cobwebs, and the general disorder, I am not at all discouraged. I'm just thankful that I do see things as they really are. When the time comes for house cleaning, He will be on hand to lend assistance. At present I am content to leave myself in His keeping — content to

imitate Jack Carter and his utter lack of solicitude. Like the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, he neither sows nor reaps, yet somehow God provides for him. Poor Jack! Poor Jack! . . . I've been asleep, Pal. The afternoon has glided by, the shadows are lengthening, and Rory has leaped up on my chair to tell me I may expect supper soon. He generally arrives on the scene three or four minutes before Nurse McDonnell. Those blessed eggs! I'm beginning to hate the very sight of them. Some night I'll wake up and begin to crow. What an ungrateful wretch I am! Mrs. McD. says I owe a huge debt to her hens already. Perhaps that is the very reason I have taken an aversion to them. One does not exactly love and cultivate the friendship of Shylock, especially if he has your name on the books for a few hundred dollars. On the contrary, I was accustomed to avoid such an individual, and was not a bit sorry when some of my less unfortunate friends left New York for other parts with their debts to Shylock unpaid. I was like the man who was asked by his minister if he forgave his enemies.

"Well," he replied, "I cannot say that I exactly forgive them, but I do my best to put them in a position where I can sympathize with them!"

What childish talk, Laddie! Why not, Claire? It's the evening hour, the children's hour.

> "Between the dark and the daylight,
> When the night is beginning to lower,
> Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
> That is known as the Children's Hour."

Nurse is coming — the writing tablet must disappear. Good night, Claire!

P.S. Before leaving me to my supper, Mrs. McDonnell pointed to two lonely horsemen traveling across the prairie toward the mountains. Nurse thinks they are her "unco guid" husband, and Charlie (the second in command up here), returning from their trip to Chicago. I may have a letter from you tonight, Claire! I'm going to pretend to sleep, but just as soon as I hear the "guid mon," John, creeping back to his Lar, I shall begin to cough, and he, in his goodness of heart, will come out and see if I wish anything. I shall then — incidentally of course — ask if there be any mail for me. Wish I had a cigar to help me pass the time until his arrival; yet what's the use of wishing, like the Carthaginian general, I've burnt all my ships behind me. No! That's a lie, Pal. I did not burn them — the cigars, I mean — I just simply stowed them away in the cupboard, when the doctor denied me. They will be all dried up. Well, Mashallah! what's the difference? I try to be stoical, but oftentimes I fail miserably. For instance, tonight I am far from being indifferent as to receiving or not receiving a letter from you.

This postscript will soon be longer than the letter itself, if I do not stop at once.

FROM CLAIRE TO LADDIE

62 Madison Avenue,
New York,

12:21 A.M.

Ladd, dear,

I've just come in; and, after all these centuries, find your blessed bundle of letters. It's just like a chat with you, and somehow I can't realize that you really are away off in those mountains with the queer name. You almost make me see the sheep ranch and its owner, and already I love the nurse who takes such good care of you. Tell me next time all about her, what she says and does, even what she feeds you, and also how often she scolds.

There were tears in my eyes, when I read — and then read again — the part where you said you need me. Little useless me! Why, Ladd, you do not need anyone to help you to be strong and brave. Don't you suppose I know "it takes more courage to sheathe the sword when one is all on fire for action than to go forth against the greatest foe," as the jester said in the little tale you used to like? No, you don't need me, but it is good to be told that you do.

At the play tonight, I tried to watch and listen, but the scenery would keep fading away and letting me see a thousand (?) miles beyond, to where there were some mountains with pines. Then I was no longer in the

theater, but out there on the veranda in the moonlight with you. You were laughing at what you termed my mock sentimentality as I quoted our old friend, Omar:

"Yon rising moon who looks for us again,
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden — and for *one* in vain!"

The curtain went down, and I was back on your beloved Great White Way. We never thought in the old days that my favorite quotation was a prophecy, did we?

But where is your "cheerful" little Pal? Dear me! you will need a tonic to counteract the effects of this if I don't stop. Perhaps tomorrow — no, it's today — when the sun is shining, I may do better.

It may be this gloom is inspired by the fact that on our way home we stopped at that funny little cafe, where the orchestra always played the things I like — Remember? I forgot to tell you we were just the old crowd with mother's chaperoning. When they played the Kreutzer Sonata, I dropped my glass. I couldn't help it; tonight more than usual everything reminded me of you.

We aren't going to give up hoping, Ladd, you and I. But when I think of you, who have everything to live for — you whom the world needs, preparing to give it all up, how I hate my own perfect strength! How I wish I might change places with you! Oh, Laddie, Laddie! What a topsy-turvy world this is!

10 A.M.

Good morning, Ladd!

The sun is shining, and all last night's gloom has melted beneath his dazzling smile; so I want to ask you about those pines. I remember being in some pine woods long ago, and I shall never, never forget what the odor was like after a rain, nor the wonderful things the pines whispered about. What do they say to you? Do they tell you they are glad you are up there with them, above the trivialities of the busy, thoughtless world; and do they ever tell you that, if you will only bend as willingly as they to the storms heaven sends, you will not be hurt by their violence? They must have done that, because in your later messages I glimpse something that means more, much more than a passive resignation. Rather it's like a calm after a tempest.

Have you been out in a storm yet? A real one with the wind all about you, and you were alone and it was dark; but you didn't care, because the pines lent you some of their strength, and you lifted your face to them and loved them. Then the storm died away, and the sun was shining again. Somewhere a bird sang. After awhile, it was sunset — the loveliest sunset, all purple and gold — and — and then quite suddenly you realized that you were hungry. For, after all, it is a prosaic world, and one cannot always stay on the mountain-top. So you hurried down to find out if there were muffins for tea — the nice fluffy kind — and strawberries with cream. Oh, now you are laughing!

I almost forgot to tell you how my heart sank when I read about your mail, arriving and departing only once in six weeks, but perhaps after all it will not be such an endless interval — thanks to your idea of the Reveries. How like you to think of them! Nothing could so nearly make up for having to get on without you as this sharing your thoughts in the old way. So you will write me what you are thinking, and I shall write back; and, somehow, the time will pass. But please, you are never to write when you don't feel quite like it.

Yours with the most loving of good wishes,

Claire.

At Home, 5 P.M.

My dear Ladd,

It is raining this afternoon, so I'm going to invite you to sit in the huge armchair just across the fireplace from me, while I make tea and talk to you. I do hope you will notice that I am wearing that little gray gown and the big yellow rose. You used to like that particular gown — I remember noticing.

Presently I should be saying, "One lump or two?" if I did not know you always take three. Just a moment — I'm going to toss this crimson cushion to tuck behind your head. Ready? Catch! Now isn't that cozy?

What shall we talk about? Let me see — I've been reading your letters again. I've read holes in some of them; and more than ever they impress me with the courageous way you are giving up your plans for the

immediate future, and facing the uncertainty of taking up your work again. It has meant a fight, of course, but you've won; and I really think you might say with Stevenson's Alan Breck Stewart, "Am I no' a bonny fighter?" For after all, Ladd, what is more worth fighting for than just the strength to accept things as they are — and smile?

You and I learned long ago to trust the Eternal Wisdom which maps out our little destinies, so we need make no question now. Someone, I forget who, said that, when we come to summing up the actual values of life and counting the things that have molded our characters, we shall count those things which at the time of their happening seemed like great losses. So perhaps one day we too shall see that God's benediction rested upon our disappointments. In the meantime, like you, I shall try to be busy and brave and gay.

Recently, I've been having some interesting and inspiring letters from the boys we know in France. Forgive me for recalling your own blighted hopes at being unable to do your part with these volunteers; but I've been thinking that you have been called to a broader battle field than theirs, on which there is the inestimable service of those who must "stand and wait." If it has been your fortune to be chosen for this special service, why then salute your Commander; and, again — smile!

As for heroism, we cannot say exactly in what it consists; I suppose because it is always relative. Even if these boys of ours do not return, will they not have escaped long, dreary years of struggle, and come all the

sooner to the final triumph of the deathless soul? In any event, you are not going to grieve if the Commander's orders seem hard to obey, nor waste time in mourning over the demolition of your air-castles. At best a lifetime is very brief, and we shall not be like him "who never sees the stars shine through his cypress trees"; for we are sure that

> "Love will dream, and Faith will trust
> (Since He Who knows our need is just),
> That somehow, somewhere, meet we must."

Have I been too serious? Why, Laddie, I believe you're asleep! Then I have tired you. Well, never mind, I'll try to slip out without waking you. Please don't open your eyes, I want to look at you. It is strange, but you don't look ill, dear. Except for the tired lines, you are such a model of health and energy that I can't, I won't believe you are not going to be well again, soon.

My love to the Bear Paw, and everything that belongs to them, from the dear good nurse down to the tiniest sheep.

Your ever and ever devoted little Pal,

Claire.

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

Sunset Cottage,
June 11, 1918.

Dear Claire:—

Everything went off as per schedule. When John McDonnell arrived home in the wee hours of the morning, I heard his rough, but gentle steps inside the house; and immediately, I proceeded to develop a violent fit of coughing. I had not mistaken his kindness of heart; for, as I surmised, he came out to inquire if I desired a glass of fresh water from Beaver Creek; and — God bless him! — fumbled in his pocket and handed me your letters. By the first gray streaks of dawn I read and reread them; then, the suspense over, a reaction set in, and I slept like a little child until the sun was high in the heavens, until (to be exact) eleven A.M.

Nurse McDonnell is wise — wondrously wise, Pal. She said that John and I needed a long sleep, and did not wake us up even for breakfast. It seems to me she has an uncanny way of knowing one's mental and physical condition, a power of delving into the soul; or is it only her innate goodness, her watchfulness and considerateness of the wants and the feelings of others — that infallible mark of the true gentleman or gentlewoman?

June 13, 1918.

Claire, do you remember that rather pathetic soliloquy of Billy Heffernan in the charming novel of Irish life, "Knocknagow, or the Homes of Tipperary"? Heffernan was in love with a young colleen, and one night, after taking her to a dance, was obliged to leave her in order to gather his creel of turf and have it in the town of Clonmel by early morning. Before parting, his sweetheart remarked that it must be lonesome all alone out there in the bog, to which Billy readily assented.

"Wisha, begor! 'tis thrue for her," he soliloquized, as he plodded up the hill. "'Tis lonesome enough. The road is lonesome, and the house is lonesome, an' the bog is lonesome, an' begor, the main street of Clonmel is the lonesomest in all. No matter where I am, I'm lonesome, so that I believe it isn't the road, or the house, or the bog, or the town, but the heart that's lonesome, and whin the heart's lonesome, the world is lonesome."

. . . . . .

Since the advent of your letters, I have been living more than ever in the past, thinking of the friends and scenes of former days. This afternoon, however, for the first time I began analyzing this feeling of loss, of lonesomeness. In the beginning when I first came to the Bear Paw, I fancied I could never live away from that mad, reckless coterie of college men with whom I was accustomed to associate while in the City. In our wild moments we were pleasure seekers. Like Omar we cried:

"Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter — and the Bird is on the Wing."

Now things are changed. There is a world of capability for joy spread about me up here in nature. As yet, I can tell you little; I am a novice, and am just beginning to delve into this inexhaustible mine, but already I realize that the balance is not always on the side of sin — that illicit joys are not the only ones on earth — that there are others which somehow do not leave a bad taste in the mouth, and remorse in the heart. So, Pal, it is not this I crave.

Nor do I miss that semblance of intellectual pursuit, which our clique assumed in their saner periods. I, as the acknowledged leader of these dilettanti, was considered clever, and a young man of "great expectations." And why, Claire? Because, forsooth, I had greater temerity than the rest, and would advance a startling theory irrespective of whether it were false or true. There is a common instrument of destruction in daily use on the battle fields of France — cannon ball. I perceive now that for years I have been firing similar black devils of destruction into hearts that looked up to me for guidance. And I even mistook for success and fame the noise caused by the discharge of those theories. Not so clever as I imagined! Eh, Claire?

How well I recall your earnestness in fighting this intellectual vandalism; and how ill repaid you were, Pal, for all your trouble! One evening in particular — it was

a week-end party at Kestler's on Long Island — I remember being especially bitter in condemning your position. Your cool way of seeing beneath appearances, of tearing away the veneer, rather irritated me that night, and I retorted to one of your remarks that, because of your religious views, you were not allowed to think for yourself. I regretted my assertion almost instantaneously — it was so unwarranted, and, coming from me, cut doubly deep. You flushed with anger, then bit your lips to stem the torrent of words that was swelling up from your heart, and finally, after a long pause, you replied in a voice ominously calm:

"Ladd, were it not for the old Church neither you nor I would be able to think at all — to her we owe everything we have intellectually. And — and Ladd, she is your Mother too; for you were baptized in her bosom."

It took a long time to heal the wound I inflicted that summer evening. But to know that I now confess to have been entirely in the wrong may obliterate everything, even the scar itself. It has been given me to see that, just as liberty of speech and license in the use of words are not synonymous, so also there is a marked difference between liberty of thought and license in thought. We have no more right to think falsely than to speak falsely. The old Church in prohibiting her children from delving into dangerous books acts wisely, as she is thus preventing them from thinking wrongly, and, as a consequence, from speaking falsely.

I begin now to tread on rather thin ice. Not only my

quondam coterie and their foibles do not appeal to me, but even you, Claire, I view from a different coigne of vantage. Please do not misunderstand me. Letters are such inadequate substitutes for the spoken word that a misconstruing of my meaning might result in a severance of that ideal friendship which has always existed between us. Let me endeavor to explain.

In the olden days I regarded you not so much as a creature like myself, but as one far off — apart from the rest — one who, for me constituted the end of things. I never saw beyond your blessed self. You were like a beacon on the highest mountaintop; only, unlike little Paul Dombey, I had never asked any questions about what was on the other side of the horizon — my undivided attention was centered on the beacon itself. Now you are changed — no, not you, but my viewpoint of you has undergone a subtle transformation. You are no longer an end in yourself — a being to be met only when the journey is over — a will-o'-the-wisp; you are now a means to the end — a real, live, human companion — one who will travel with me "adown life's hill together," sharing the burdens of the day and its heats — one to solace though not entirely to fill the human heart.

So, since former associates — since not even precious Claire is destined to satisfy entirely that restless longing, what must my conclusion be? With our mutual friend in the quaint story of Irish life, I must finally admit that it must be "the heart that's lonely," the human heart craving for something to satisfy it to the full. Do

you remember those exquisite lines in Charles Phillip's poem, "Music"?

> "There is a hunger in my heart to-night,
> A longing in my soul, to hear
> The voice of heaven o'er the noise of earth
> That doth assail my ear:
> For we are exiled children of the skies,
> Lone and lost wanderers from home.
> The stars come out like lamps in windows lit
> Far from where we roam;
> Like candles lit to show the long late way,
> Dear kindly beacons sure and bright;
> But O, the heavy journeying, and O
> The silence of the night!"

The sun is slowly setting in the west, Pal, making the gaunt trees stand out clear and distinct on the far-off horizon. Somehow, Claire, I cannot get away from the presentiment that my life too is slowly setting. Things that before were muddled and confused now appear in a clearer, truer light. Would it not be the irony of fate if this self-constituted iconoclast bent his knees before an image — the image of God I see mirrored in the works of His hand — nature?

Should this happen, I know one rather lovable individual, who, nevertheless, would not refrain from saying: "I told you so!"

Can you, by any possible manner of means, guess who this person is?

Back to earth again — supper. No, I made a mistake, milk and eggs.

Good night!

Sunset Cottage,
June 17, 1918.

Dear Claire,

It's rather difficult to compress into one short letter all the happenings of today. Don't laugh, please! Oh, it's useless! You are already smiling good humoredly on being told that remarkable incidents occur in the Bear Paw. What! an unusual event take place on a large sheep ranch, forty miles from the frontiers of civilization — impossible! Did one of John's lambkins die? Guess again. Did Rory fall into Beaver Creek? Stop kidding the goldfish. No, indeed! cats are entirely too cautious and too correct in their deportment to commit any such flagrant violation of social conventionalities as falling into a stream. They are careful of appearances; even in their wildest moments of intense excitement — when stalking a bird, for instance — cats never lose sight of the fact that they are cats, everything is done according to set rules and with an eye to elegance and grace of action.

For the above reason I do not believe that the tabby Gray laments about, was ever so indiscreet as to allow her desire for goldfish to get the better of her judgment. If that particular cat actually fell into a bowl, there is but one explanation — a dog was after its precious scalp. That's the only time a cat becomes confused and may be depended upon to act foolishly. Are you now thoroughly satisfied that Rory is not the cause and the subject of these lines?

All levity aside, Claire, nothing occurred here today

externally worthy of record. The incidents I refer to were mostly internal — psychological.

When I awoke this morning, it had been raining for some time. It was a steady, cold downpour that chilled the bones and warped one's outlook on life, obliterating from the memory everything of a pleasant nature. After breakfast (much against my inclination, and wearing, in all probability, the countenance of a martyr) I began to perform outpost duty from the front veranda, or, as Nurse would phrase it, "to take the cure."

It was too cold to write; and — (I'll blame this on the condition of the weather too, though it's defenseless) — my imagination refused to work. I tried oh so hard, to convince myself of the many advantages I enjoyed at Sunset — climatical advantages, physical advantages, and social advantages. But it was of no avail. Like the light-hearted fellow who sat at his desk in a cold room, and who by placing an oil painting of a glowing fireplace before his gaze endeavored to persuade himself that he felt tolerably warm, I, too, found that there is such a thing as working the imagination overtime; then, when it is necessary for it to function normally, it refuses to operate at all. For, when I came to ponder my social advantages — that was the last reason for contentment I had set myself to consider — my imagination refused to respond.

As a matter of course, I was obliged to eliminate John and Mrs. McDonnell: they had their work to occupy them and one could not expect that they leave it and entertain me. Who was left, Claire? (Recollect the chilli-

ness of the weather conditions and the lethargy of my imagination!) Simply Rory! And, hang it all (though Jerome K. Jerome spent five or six valuable pages in describing the good qualities of cats — how trustful they are, never failing you in time of need; how discreet, never repeating any gossip you may chance to let slip in their hearing; how forgiving, never holding a harsh word against a fellow; and dozens of other perfections I will not tire you by repeating) — hang it all, cats are cats. I, at least, desire another species of confidant. Today, with each pitter-patter of rain on the roof above me, this utter lack of human companionship was borne in upon me with renewed force. My social advantages were nil — absolutely nil.

Suddenly the door of the house opened and Nurse approached. There must have been something utterly forlorn in my appearance, for her sympathy was quickly aroused. Nevertheless, though her eyes glistened suspiciously, no newly commissioned officer was ever more stern in commanding me to go indoors, and no command was ever more welcome than the one she imposed on me.

I have never described to you the cozy, little home the McDonnells have erected here: nor shall I do so now, except to say that it is thoroughly modern, and was planned and built entirely by John himself. The design of the fireplace in the living room is quite original, and, though chaste and plain in the extreme, accords well with the unpretentious surroundings of the room itself. Today the bright, warm glow from the

burning logs permeated the entire room, contrasting favorably with the cold, bleak day without. A large comfortable Morris chair (another proof of John's fabrile skill) stood close by the fireplace, waiting to welcome me to its bosom. Nurse McD., after bringing in my blanket, closed the door and remarked:

"This is your first vacation day — make the most of it, Mr. — Mr. Ladd!"

Then (would you believe it?) she went to the mantelpiece and brought forth a little red box of Pall Mall cigarettes, king's size, and presented them to me. It seems that John, on his last trip to Chicago, was solemnly warned not to return home without this precious cargo, as Nurse just knows I enjoy smoking, and had foreseen this occasion.

How little it takes to make the human heart sing, Claire! A few moments in front of that cheery fireplace banished all dour thoughts and forebodings. Almost unconsciously those lines of Tibullus — so appropriate to the occasion — began running through my mind:

> "Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem
> Aequore ab indomito dum sibi nauta timet,
> Aut gelidas hibernas aquas cum fuderit Auster
> Securum somnos imbre juvante sequi."

It was the nurse who interrupted my reverie. With eyes closed, I was listening to the rain beating against the window, and, at the same time, was endeavoring to recall Tibullus' picture of the old sailor's battling on just such a day as this with mountainous waves on the briny

deep. Vividly I saw it all. The sinking ship, the rough old sea-dog a short distance off clinging to a broken spar, dark night descending with the rain over the whole ghastly scene — when I heard my name called in a faint, far-away tone.

"Ladd! are you really beginning to sleep?"

Of course I immediately began to look indignant. The very idea — my sleeping! However, before I could frame an absolute denial (or alibi — I don't recall which) to her question, she interrupted me with:

"Listen, Ladd, I have great news to tell you. John and I are going to adopt a youngster from Helena. Last fall, when hubby was in that city on business, he paid a visit to the orphanage to see a neighbor's child. Since then the idea of our caring for one of those tots has steadily grown upon John. The lad he chose is an unusually bright boy of about nine years of age. Physically, however, he has one defect — a withered leg, the effect of a severe attack of infantile paralysis contracted some four or five years previous. The superintendent confided to John that the child would have been accepted long ago into a good home were it not for this deformity. Still the youngster's gentle manners, his whole-hearted trust in all those he came in contact with, and especially his old-fashioned ways — these won John's heart. 'That's the boy for me,' he said.

"Naturally the superintendent was pleased too; his eyes beamed — Albert was to have a home at last.

"John has pestered the life out of me ever since that trip. Whenever we are alone, he begins to speak of

Albert and questions me as to when we should bring him to Sunset. Would you believe it? — on his way back from Chicago, he went to Helena, then back again to Havre just for the privilege of a few hours' interview with King Albert. Tomorrow he makes the final trip to bring the youngster home with him.

"So, Ladd" — this with a mock sigh of resignation — "Ladd, prepare your soul for tribulation. Solitude is a thing of the past."

"Entre nous," Claire, Mrs. McDonnell is camouflaging. Despite appearances, I am convinced she is the arch instigator — she is even more eager than her guid mon for the arrival of Albert.

Ah, those women! How much guile there is even in the best of them!

"Ladd, you are making fun of me! That cigarette smoke cannot hide the twinkle in your eyes. You are engaged in the delightful pastime of reading my thoughts!"

And she pointed an accusing finger at me.

"Well, I must go — I have neglected my dinner."

A moment later I was alone by the fireside, listening to the crackling of the logs and the pitter-patter of the rain outside.

It is with a grateful heart that I pen these lines. Grateful that in my forced journey from Jerusalem to Jericho I, too, have met some good Samaritans — people, who not only took me into their homes but into their hearts also, gently binding up my wounds and pouring therein oil and wine. And I trust Claire that these remem-

brances of good deeds and kind words will cling to me and become ever more vivid, so that the rainy days of life — my sickness and my misfortunes — may not sour me, but that my heart may ever remain thankful, ever happy until "I hear the deep lave of the broad ocean wave, and the River at last meets the Sea."

A little child shall lead them; a little child shall lead them! . . .

. . . I now admit that I am beginning to sleep.

Adios, Claire! Adios!

FROM CLAIRE TO LADDIE

At Home,
June 22, 1918.

My Ain Laddie:

I knew those mountains would do that for you! Even had the evidence of some of your earlier letters been lacking, I could not have doubted that almost unconsciously you were coming to look from nature up to nature's God. Such surroundings as yours simply force one's spiritual growth.

The man who said:

> "I need not shout my faith: thrice eloquent
> Are the quiet trees and the green listening sod.
> Hushed are the stars, whose power is never spent;
> The hills are mute — yet how they speak of God!"

must have experienced the same potent influence.

So, too, did the author of those exquisite lines "To a Mountain Stream" which you quoted for me. He was blessed with a true ear, or he never would have caught the message it called to him in passing.

Truly, everything in Nature does stimulate us to generosity. She is so prodigal of her gifts; and I wish that I could realize, as you have done, the length and breadth of application of the lesson she would impart. It occurs to me that we should all find the path through life in-

finitely less toilsome if we could take to heart the significance of that one word — generosity. I think it must be the keynote of real happiness.

No wonder you and your Beaver Creek were friends at first sight. It is a perfect expression of what your own life has been — one glad whole-hearted giving of self, unmindful of the cost. But it pays, dear! "Give to the world the best you have, and the best will come back to you." The best is coming back to you now in the unquenchable courage with which you are holding yourself down to a deliberate facing of the truth, and a splendid acceptance of things as they are. The return will be yours in full abundance when "the River at last meets the Sea."

It is a pity those dry-land farmers you spoke of cannot get the brook's message too, and understand that its help in changing their barren, brown fields into verdant green gardens is the very least service it can render. Why can't they know that it will perform the same unbelievable wonder in their souls if they will only hear it aright? Perhaps some of them do, but I fear that to most of them it is only water, and that "a beaufield is only a beaufield."

Do you remember all the lovely things Thoreau said about his beaufield? Well, they are true, because if a garden isn't a veritable wonderland, then I'd like to know what is.

You see, I have one myself — a war-garden. There is a tiny space out by the garage that I persuaded the gardener to let me have. He made an awful row about

it at first because he had some roses there that he thought a great deal of; but after I had explained that nobody could be expected to eat roses and that they wouldn't help our soldier boys any, he gave in. Of course, I scratched my hands dreadfully when I pulled up the bushes; after doing a lot of digging up and setting out, naturally I expect a successful harvest. I've been doing a great deal of thinking too. Somehow a garden makes you think.

There are so many different ways in which one may love all those beautiful, green, growing things; but it seems that the love of a gardener for the things he has planted and raised is something like the love of parent for child. Maybe that is why Andrew was so grieved about his roses.

I remember one day down in Panama we went into a florist's shop to buy some orchids. You know the orchids there are perfectly marvelous. The shopkeeper who came to serve us seemed such a great rough fellow that one wondered to see him in those beautiful surroundings. But when he took us into the room where the growing and flowering plants were, I wish you could have seen the transformation! He was no longer the same individual. His face softened and brightened, his touch became so gentle, and his voice so caressing as he arranged his orchids and spoke to them, that I was sure he believed each blossom knew and loved him. He handed us our flowers as if he were intrusting us with a great treasure. And so he was.

It was just a little, everyday incident, but it im-

pressed me inasmuch as it awakened me with a shock to the fact that I had been ignoring and missing some of the loveliest things in the world just because I had been too careless and too blind to see them. It brought home to me the meaning of these words:

> "Flowers are thoughts of the Spirit of God,
> Their love is the love of His grace,
> Their fragrance is breath of divinity,
> Their beauty, the light of His face."

Only, Ladd, I should wish to make them include my lettuce, artichokes, radishes, and even my weeds.

Now, what my little garden has done for me, God's great out-of-doors is doing for you. I knew all along that you must have felt its influence, even though I feared you were dwarfing your soul by yielding to the fascination of the purely intellectual.

Your association during college life with men whose brilliant minds made companionship rather like a series of mental fencing contests — each regarding the other as an opponent worthy of his steel; and all on the lookout for the slightest advantage in this war of wits — was responsible for your developing a passion for original and startling theories, which you never could have accepted in your heart. This was less a matter of personal inclination, I think, than a result of hypercriticism which prevailed among your set. A long-continued association of this kind was, assuredly having its effect; yet there was in your character too much of pure gold to be substantially altered by admixture of baser metal.

I know it is a popular pose to pretend that while virtue is to be commended in the abstract, in the concrete it makes rather dull reading and still more prosaic living. I cannot help being amazed at this point of view, because I always felt that even if virtue had nothing more to recommend it than its very attractiveness, that would be sufficient. There is an irresistible loveliness in "whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are pure," a loveliness which sooner or later all must acknowledge, whether they want to or not.

Why, Ladd, isn't the difference between good and evil something like the contrast between one of those charming cafes where we spent an hour after the theater, with its lights softly shaded, with all its atmosphere perfumed with American Beauties, with its music somewhere behind the palms; and the night outside — the cool, pure air, the sky, a glorious field of daisies against a background of blue, and the moon sailing gently over all, such a sky and moon as you see from your veranda. Tell me, dear, which scene will pall first?

Yes, I recall the incident on Long Island, and it did hurt — more deeply than you could know; not because of the wound to my own feelings, but rather because of the fact that you could think such things — you whose faith should have been your most precious heritage.

I knew though, even at the time, that it was only your pride of intellect which resented any restrictions being placed upon it that led you to condemn the authorities whose sacred duty it is to safeguard that faith.

You yourself have said, "As we think, so we are." Therefore is it not for us to think the highest and noblest thoughts, that our words and actions may be the natural outgrowth of them?

Pardon, dearest, taking advantage of my woman's prerogative to use the time-honored, or dishonored, "I told you so," as per your prophecy. In doing this I am not attributing to myself any special cleverness of insight; but merely am insisting upon my undying faith in that ideal, which was, is, and ever shall be — you.

Do you know when you hinted at the possibility that your having changed with regard to me might weaken or sever the tie between us, I wondered for a moment if you had ever gauged the depth of my affection for you? It would be a poor and selfish thing if it rested upon your devotion to me.

I cannot hope to make you understand the happiness your altered angle of vision has brought to me. But know this, dear, I have so longed and prayed that you would come to feel that there is nothing in this little life of ours which can completely satisfy our heart, that, now the realization has come to you, you seem more than ever mine. You were never so nearly my beloved as you will be when the sunset hour of your life has passed, and I shall know that somewhere you have fulfilled the ideal of all you wished to be in your highest and finest moods.

Just now, however, it gives me a bit of a heartache to think of your being such a long way off, and I wish I were with you to lend you some of my strength when

you are lonely and need help. But such a wish availeth me nothing, so I too must learn to be content with things as they are.

As ever,

Claire.

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

Bear Paw Mountains,
June 25, 1918.

Dear Claire:—

John left early this morning for Helena to fetch his little comrade from the orphan asylum. Nurse is indoors washing the supper dishes, or attending to her various other household affairs; while the idle one is sitting on the veranda with Rory, the faithful, watching the sun sink slowly behind the far-off, Western Rockies. I shall find it hard to leave this abode. It is so peaceful, so restful. It is well named Sunset Cottage, for being high up it catches the last rays of the dying sun, which seems somehow to cast a supernatural spell about all the surroundings, illuminating this humble dwelling much as the halo does the countenance of a saint, hovering and lingering over it as if in sign of God's special benediction. Perhaps some day when the summit is reached, we two shall return, and spend a few weeks in this delightful spot. Perhaps ! ! ! . . . Perhaps ! ! ! . . . Ah, what a builder I am of Spanish castles!

"We are the music makers and we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers or sitting by desolate streams;

World losers and world forsakers on whom the pale moon gleams,

Yet we are the makers and shakers of the world forever it seems."

I suppose you know what I am thinking about? Yes, Claire, the old, old "finis omnium — pallida mors."

"Sunset and evening star, and one clear call for me,
And may there be no moaning at the bar when I put out to sea."

Why is it that we invariably link the closing of day with death? It may be simply because the twilight hour, the lengthening shadows, the approach of night forcibly remind us that, in like manner, our day's work shall speedily come to a close — that soon "the night cometh in which no man shall work." Or perhaps it is because the toil and labor of the day have predisposed us for rest and sleep; and is not sleep the twin brother of death? However, be the causes what they may, the fact remains — evening lends itself to recollection, to reviewing the past, to meditating on the things to come.

Tonight, like yonder trees on the western horizon, my past life looms up vivid, distinct. Failure seems to be the predominant note of it. Failure to reach the ideals set for myself long years ago; failure to perform the things determined upon; failure even to reach the physical standard set by the nation, which would have enabled me to enter the Army, and, at least, end well a career otherwise so unsuccessful; for the finish of the race, Claire, is what counts.

Naturally, then, one becomes rather depressed and sad at times over such a past. What a wondrously wise

doctor Thomas à Kempis was! He diagnosed my case and thousands of others when he said: "A joyous going forth bringeth a sad return." How happy we were in the morning of life! How bravely we set forth on the quest! But, ah, me! the sadness of the return in the evening because — because of the mistakes, the failures of the day; for

> "It is not the things you do, dear,
> But the things you've left undone
> That causes many a heartache
> At the setting of the sun."

And yet, Pal, because these reminiscences tend to humble one, please do not infer that this cross I bear is making me a misanthrope, that it is souring me against life and men. No, I would not have you think this. It's a glorious place to be in this grand, old, work-a-day world of ours! And I am oh! so happy to be part and parcel of it. Still, Claire dear, should my sojourn be rather a short one, I would not chafe under the sentence; for it seems to me one misses the main benefit of adversity who does not become submissive under its chastening strokes: while, on the other hand, people who have become gentle and kind under great suffering wield a strange, invisible power — they are magnetic and are well-worth meeting. Haven't you found this so? I have; and often speculate as to the reason behind this phenomenon. It appears to me the solution is that God desires real men and women to do His work; and no one can be considered worthy of the

appellation who has not passed through the crucible. Francis Thompson expressed it well:

"Ah! must —
Designer infinite! —
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn
With it?"

However, even disregarding the natural advantages that accrue to one from adversity bravely borne, there is a thought that overshadows all else and sustains me in the present crisis in spite of the waves of lonesomeness and tediousness that at times threaten to engulf me. Of late it is forcing itself upon me with renewed vigor, and colors all my ideas. It is the simple fact of the Providence of God.

Not long ago a party of surveyors enlisted the services of a half-breed from this neighborhood to assist them in locating a new road to the Missouri River. These men intrusted themselves entirely to their newly acquired guide, submitting to his judgment as to the best way of accomplishing the object they had in view. There is an Infallible Guide who knows all the trails that lead Home. He chooses for each of us the highway best suited for our strength and endurance. Some speed along a broad, smooth thoroughfare; others move by painful stages over the stony road of sickness and disease. Yet what matters it provided we meet at last at the journey's end — provided our epitaph be:

"The soldier is home from the battle's din,
The traveler is safe in the Master's inn."

Safe at last! The toil and the heat of the day are over. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." In the meantime, Claire, let us steadfastly journey on, trusting always in our Guide, in our "Lux in tenebris."

> "The night is dark and I am far from Home,
> Lead Thou me on!"

It may seem rather strange, but these reflections of mine on the failures of the past do not discourage me as to the future. The past is gone! God forgive and wipe away all its mistakes. There is one good result springs from our misdeeds — they make us more humble, more diffident of ourselves in the future. And for this very reason I have greater hopes in what is before me. Oh! I may stumble again! I may not attain that literary success I long for! But what of that? If all the old, broken-down actors, bankrupt businessmen, and discarded clerks were to come together, and one were privileged to hear their life's song, what a glorious harmony it would make in praise of better things in men. Success is a rather variable factor. Robert Lewis, literary editor of the *Times,* was once asked to name the most successful man in New York City. He singled out a decrepit priest, some eighty years old, who had spent most of his life ministering to the poor on the East Side; and who, after years of hardship and toil, had scarcely enough to sustain himself in old age. Lewis was right — that man had been a success in life!

I may not attain success, Claire, but I shall strive very hard to deserve it. I shall fight in the years to come. How vividly the words of big-hearted Cyrano come back to me tonight!

. . . "To work without one thought of gain or fame,
To realize that journey to the moon!"

And that wonderful last scene where, propped against a tree in the convent garden, he awaits death, sword in hand.

"What say you? It is useless? Ay, I know
But who fights ever hoping for success?
I fought for lost cause, and for fruitless quest!"
. . . . . .
". . . Parley? No, never! You too, Folly, — you?
I know that you will lay me low at last;
Let be! Yet I fall fighting, fighting still!
You strip from me the laurel and the rose!
Take all! Despite you there is yet one thing
I hold against you all, and when, to-night,
I enter Christ's fair court, and lowly bowed,
Sweep with doffed casque the heaven's threshold blue;
One thing is left that, void of stain or smutch
I bear away despite you . . .
My plume!"

That's all that counts, Claire — to keep one's plume unstained, to await the end with snow-white heart.

Have I been too serious? Blame it on that gorgeous sunset — it made me forget myself.

Good night!

Ladd.

P.S. It's growing dark. I just now looked around; and, behold! the moon crept up out of the east. That same old moon whither de Bergerac yearned to go. Oh, those hearts of ours! Those hearts of ours! How they sigh after the infinite! Shall we, Claire, realize *our* journey toward the moon? In God's good time I trust so.

Good night again!

L.

FROM CLAIRE TO LADDIE

92nd Street,
New York

Ladd Dear,

How could you accuse me of laughing at your account of that eventful day which brought you a blazing fire, a box of Pall Malls, and the promise of a new interest in life? Why, there are three occurrences with a thrill in each one! What more could you ask?

I sat for a long time thinking about the beautiful things these friends of yours are doing in taking into their hearts and home the little crippled lad from Helena; and I rejoice with you that one is allowed now and then to have his faith in the innate goodness of human nature confirmed.

How rich these good Samaritans are, away off up there, far from the things which our world counts as worth while, but so near the real values of life! I think I envy them with all my heart. They have their lovely mountains, their dear little home, their love for each other, and the opportunity of making others happy.

All those beautiful gifts we can bestow like love, or friendship, or kindness, will come back after many days to adorn and enrich our own lives. For after all it is only

by our own giving that we are enriched. Wasn't it Watts, the English painter, who made these words the motto for the picture of the death of a rich man:

"What he saved, he lost,
What he gave, he hath?"

In extenuation of my wicked envy of your friends' riches, let me remind you that besides all the blessings I've been trying to sum up, the McDonnells have you; and apropos of that same you, I prophesy a delightful comradeship between you and the adopted son.

He will doubtlessly possess, not only all Rory's cardinal virtues — fidelity, discretion, pretty manners, and the rest; but a few additional ones of his own, besides the advantages of communicativeness and intelligence. I believe there are more times than you care to say when you are human enough to feel that you've had about enough of scenery and solitude, and long for more satisfactory companionship. Perhaps this Tiny Tim of the McDonnells will, in a measure, supply the need. I wonder if I ought to be jealous? I am quite sure I ought, but equally sure I cannot. I am too glad of anything that may brighten your days of enforced illness ever so little.

You cannot deny that you are already making plans which will result in the hopeless spoiling of the small protégé of your hosts. If Mrs. McD. is wise she will lay down a few iron-clad rules, but of course she won't be, and you will have your own way as usual.

I, too, felt a little warmth around my heart as I men-

tally contemplated your cozy, open fire, and, above all, the Pall Malls. I remember you said you had, willy-nilly, sworn off smoking, and had consigned to the flames all occasions of temptation along that line. This heroic holocaust evoked ever so much of my sympathy for you, because I can understand the lure of my Lady Nicotine almost as well as if I had been a devotee at her shrine. So then naturally I fancied that having, as you said, burnt all your bridges, you were engaged in bestrewing their ashes on your head. Now along comes Mr. McDonnell, and builds brand new ones for you. That means, doesn't it, an improvement in your health?

You did not, I'm sure, foresee that your "Bachelor's Reverie" before that fire was destined to rouse in a certain, selfish, lazy person the desire to do something truly worth while. Anyway it did; and I want you to help me think what it might be. You know there may be days ahead when life will be very dark and lonely for me, and then I shall need an occupation that will keep me from thinking too much about it. What sayest thou, my lord, to a Red Cross nurse? Now don't you make any of those tiresome remarks about the costume being attractive, because I've heard them all, and besides I'm serious. Works of mercy have a peculiar attraction for me, Ladd; does that suggest a nurse's calling?

Not long ago I armed myself with flowers and fruit, and ran out to the hospital to see a special friend of mine. I am quite sure I have never told you about her. She is a perfect love of an old lady from that most charming of all places, Ireland. She has snow-white hair,

and the sweetest eyes I have ever seen. The eyes have a true Irish smile in their depths, and forgot to grow old with the rest of her — they aren't a minute over sixteen. She tells about the famine in Ireland as though it had happened last week. She suffers a great deal, but is wonderfully patient and cheery.

Today, however, she seemed quieter than usual, and for a long time just listened to my chatter without saying anything. Finally I noticed that she was gazing at me with her customary animation, so I settled myself for one of her fascinating reminiscences. Instead of the story, she asked me, with a soulful look, where I got "that darlin' of a hat!" There you have the eternal feminine — she's only eighty-nine! It transpired that as a girl she had been a milliner, which accounts for her interest in modes.

Next came a visit to some tiny incurables. First of all, a two-year-old boy with a broad, white forehead, pale gold hair, large serious violet eyes, and a useless foot. When I laid a great orange in his hand, he was the exact counterpart of a statue I saw somewhere of the Infant Redeemer. You know the one where He rests on the arm of St. Joseph, and holds the world in His little palm. This baby friend of mine never smiles, but when he sees someone whom he likes, his face brightens and fairly radiates light, while not a muscle moves. He is wonderful, dear; I wish you could see him!

Then there is a bit of a girl with a crooked spine, and the great, black, wondering eyes of a Murillo angel.

I could write volumes about them all but I won't tire

you. I won't even tell you about the little darky twins who are so black and shiny, and as exactly alike as two licorice drops. I am sure you would have liked them.

I forgot to mention that these babies are foundlings. Isn't it unbelievable that anyone could be so heartless as to desert the poor, helpless, wee things; and isn't it a blessed comfort to know that they have one Friend who said: "Suffer them to come unto Me"? All the way home I prayed that He might take the little boy with the pale gold hair, and the girl with cherub's eyes, before they learn more about the world which doesn't want them.

It may be that their special mission is to make those of us who are privileged to come into contact with them a trifle less worldly and selfish. Nevertheless it weighs on one's heart; and I am rather depressed and sad tonight, Ladd.

I'm waiting eagerly to make your Tiny Tim's acquaintance. And oh, yes! just one more admonition. Should your commanding officer again assign you to sentinel duty on the veranda in the rain, say this to yourself:

> "So in the common quiet of our lives
> Some cares and sorrows like these dreary showers
> Chill with the breath of winter, gray with grief —
> But in the end, the sunlight and the flowers."

And you'll find yourself smiling.

You see, Laddie, you and I have to school ourselves to look, not at the clouds and the rain before us, but

above and beyond to where we hope some day to find for always, the sunlight and the flowers.

Claire.

Somewhere on the Great Lakes,
June 30, 1918.

Are you surprised, Ladd, to find me out here, so far from home, and so near to you? I'll tell you how it happened. Mother has fancied of late (quite wrongly, of course, as I'm always well) that I'm growing thinner; so when Alice wrote me that her brother Bob and his wife were taking a little party out for a few weeks on and around the Lakes, and wanted me along, why, mother insisted — and here I am.

I said I simply wouldn't come unless I could be back in three weeks. It is then your precious letters are due, and I wouldn't miss them by a fraction of a second for a trip to Mars and back.

It may seem strange that we are off on any sort of lark in these troubled times; but it isn't really a lark. Bob just had to come. You see so many of his men are off at the training camps or already "over there," that he has had a great deal of extra work and worry about the factory. The doctor told him finally that if he didn't slow up he would break down entirely, and Bob had the sense to see he was in the right. Then, too, Alice needed a bit of relaxation. Her fiancé sailed two weeks ago, and though she was perfectly splendid about it — sent Jerry off with a smile, and told him it was next

best to going herself — she finds her courage waning now he's gone.

We are having a delightful little voyage, as every arrangement is made for our comfort. All our wishes are anticipated on board this pocket-edition Cunard liner of Bob's. In fact everything is too perfect. It is as though people set too much store by that sort of thing; and yet, way down in their hearts, the rest don't care any more about it than I do.

Tonight after dinner, I ran off by myself to a little corner where I felt sure no one could find me. Then I thought of quantities of things I wanted to talk to you about, but you weren't there, you know, so I said them to the stars. Did I ever tell you that the best part of being with you was that I didn't have to *say* things? Each of us knew about what the other was thinking anyway. I wonder if either of us will ever find more perfect comradeship? Even now those few hundred miles are about all that separate us.

Then I was musing over Alice, thinking how brave she is. Though her whole heart is over there with Jerry, she lets no one see it. She is always her old, bright, charming self. Then I wondered if there were not some other givings up that are harder still than hers. At least she knows there is a chance that some day her soldier will come back. From somewhere back in my memory, these lines resounded:

"Since you went away, I have entered within
A sisterhood mystic and great,
Of women who've learned the great lesson to give,

And are learning another, to wait.
But I strive, like the rest, not to doubt or to fear;
To murmur, or sigh, or complain,
But to trust in His might, and to know, by His grace,
That your sacrifice cannot be vain."

For what do accidents of time or place matter, or even what one's "bit" may be, if only he "plays the game"? Sacrifice is sacrifice. . . . Just then, along came Bob, smoking that villainous pipe of his, which Elizabeth considers her only rival, and asked me what in all creation I was moping out there for. I started to make some frivolous reply, but changed my mind when he sat down in the big chair next to me, and looked at me in his nice big-brotherly way. So then I told him I was thinking about you, and just indulging in some undisturbed lonesomeness. He offered to go away if I didn't want to talk, but if I did, he'd like to have some news himself.

I told him where you are, and your reason for being there; and finally got around to that meeting between Ladd, the class orator, and Jack Carter, the valedictorian. He was awfully sorry about Jack, but yet was not entirely astonished. He recalled that Jack had shown such possibilities for good that everyone expected great things of him; and one time you had remarked that you hoped Jack would never get off the right track because if he did he would do it so very thoroughly. Then Bob added, with a grin: "Bet my hat old Ladd said, 'Corruptio optimi pessima.'"

Did you?

Suddenly he jumped to his feet and yelled, "Great Scott! I forgot that I'd been sent out to find you and send you in to give an account of yourself. The mob is all swarmed around the piano making night hideous, and I suppose they want you to help. Now you run!"

So I ran.

On terra firma,

A week later.

One perfect evening we landed on the shore of Lake Superior and came up through the dusk to a log bungalow in the midst of several hundred acres of white pine and cedar; and here we are to remain for another week or so.

It seemed at first glance to be an ideally primitive place, but once in the log cabin, we found so many accessories of civilization that I was afraid to look out of the windows in the morning for fear of discovering golf-links! What an Old-Man-of-the-Sea the world is, and how, for the hundredth time, I envy you your sheep ranch in the Bear Paw.

It is late afternoon now, and I am established down by an old deserted lumber camp on the place, with nothing but the tall, tranquil trees for company. Here I can talk to you undisturbed. What shall I tell you first — how we are amusing ourselves?

A few days after our arrival, we were joined by some of the men from one of the officers' training camps. They have been furloughed for a few days preparatory

to sailing. Most of them are classmates of Bob's, and of yours too, by the way, so he captured them for part of the time. The only stranger is a young French officer who was sent to the U. S. to act as instructor, and who is now returning with the others.

Most of our evenings are spent in the huge living room, gathered about the log fire. The talk is, needless to say, mostly war talk.

The French soldier had been in the thick of things for a long time. His stories of trench life — and trench deaths — fairly sizzle with interest. The kind of interest that makes you want to laugh and cry at the same time. Our men are literally counting the minutes until they can be off!

There! despite my resolutions, I seem constantly to be reopening that wound of yours. But I console myself with the thought that since your "bit" is to "sheathe the sword," the courage which nerves you to "play the game" as you are doing it, is not an unsubstantial and fickle something like the stuff dreams are made of, but something very real which diffuses itself to increase the sum total of the world's store. You remember Meredith said:

"No life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife,
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby." —

Last night, Bob's wife suggested that we drop all tragedy, and go down to the shore for a good old college evening. Accordingly we had an immense bonfire, and while the men all smoked their cigarettes — only they now call them fags — there were songs and stories

galore. Isn't it remarkable what a bond those dear songs form?

Somehow it came about that somebody near me asked about you, and Bob told him you had rather gone under temporarily, and had been packed off West to be braced up again; which was the only reason you were not in training with them. The other said:

"Oh yes, Ladd was always a fiend for work; but he'll be on his feet again in no time."

A third commented:

"Curious fellows, these writer chaps, forever working themselves to death, and acting as if they enjoyed it!"

I won't tell you all they said, because I don't approve of spoiling people; but I gathered that in a general way Ladd was deemed the best fellow and truest friend that ever lived.

Someone told about the night after a big game which you had helped to win for them, when the crowd met to celebrate, and you failed to appear. A search revealed the fact that you had gone to sit with the old taxi driver who used to bring the boys up from the station. He was sick, and you had been cheering him up and looking after him when none of the rest had thought of it. Your excuse for deserting the boys was that "you had promised the poor fellow you would come, and thought they wouldn't miss you."

"Ladd thought we wouldn't miss him! Did you get that?" demanded Billy Clarke.

You never told me this, though I seem to remember

that you often spoke of the fine things the other boys did.

Finally, at star time, the fire died out; and as the moon had risen gloriously, we let it stay dead.

Then there grew a wonderful silver path from us straight to the moon herself: and I found myself pondering if all the tiny wavelets which went to make up this glittering pathway would ever again feel quite like the others; or if they would keep ever after some of the gentle warmth and softness imparted by the moonbeam's kiss.

Isn't it a bit the same with our lives? No one can live entirely unto himself but must unconsciously influence and be influenced by every other life he meets.

"No star ever rose and set without influence somewhere." How much more then must a human life have its effect for good or ill! It makes one feel terribly important and responsible, doesn't it? But I know it's true; since my own life is broader and nobler for having met yours: and I cannot help hoping that yours is just a little brighter or more happy for having crossed mine.

There you have it! A frank admission that my thoughts are always traveling in a circle. They begin with you, and no matter how far they wander, back they are once more at the starting place.

This is perverse, I know, because everyone here is so charming and tries to make one content. To be sure they don't suspect it, but this particular one is ungrateful and refuses to be content.

Won't you let me persuade your mother to come to your Bear Paw and take me with her? You'd better say, yes, because I solemnly warn you that I shall come anyway, if you stay much longer. Here is sufficient reason, if you want one:

"Because the sunset sky
Makes music in my soul
Only to fail and die;
Shall I not take the whole
Of beauty that it gives
While yet it lives?"

Tell me why not? If you can!

Lovingly,

Claire.

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

Sunset Cottage,
July 10, 1918.

Dearest Claire,

Altogether unknowingly, the last few lines you penned cost me quite a struggle — I trust you will never realize how violent it was!

Some three weeks ago I noticed for the first time a little cottage almost entirely hidden among the trees, on one of the neighboring mountainsides. Inquiring of John about the inhabitants of this house, I was told it was the abode of a newly married couple, the husband being often employed by John in the shearing season.

I see, at times, this stalwart youth hurrying homeward after the day's toil is over. His eager stride proclaims the pleasant surprise that awaits him. And I find myself muttering: "Lucky fellow! Lucky fellow, to possess strength, a sweetheart, a home!"

From my citadel on the porch, when shadows are long and eventide is here, my eyes repeatedly revert to that spot. I see the light twinkling through the trees; I recall what that little lamp symbolizes — home, companionship, mutual trust and affection, and — well, it's

a hard struggle for "the outcast" to keep back his tears.

In this frame of mind I receive a letter from Claire. I can only describe it as perfectly in keeping with her name — beautiful. I read between the lines, and discover in that beautiful letter, Claire's more beautiful soul. I have only to write the word, "Come," and Claire will join me. Home and a light shining through the darkness — these will be a reality for Ladd.

Imagine then the struggle! A hundred times, if once, I have asked myself how I ever deserved such a gift from God. And honestly Claire, I pity from my heart those former chums of mine who are constantly bent on pitying me. I'm not to be pitied! I'm to be envied. This sickness has revealed to me many things and by no means the least has been the unfolding before my eyes of the soul of a heroine.

At present I cannot trust myself to reply in detail to your generous letter. There are, of course, physical obstacles — I'm unable to do my share; and I judge it unfair that one should be called upon to pull the load destined for two, since marriage may become rather irksome under such circumstances. Nevertheless, I already know your answer to this objection; your unselfish nature would cast it aside as unworthy even of consideration. Perhaps you are in the right. Yet know this, Claire, that Ladd cannot in justice to you write that word which means so much to him. Sometime (sooner, perchance, than you suspect) — when not so much physically as spiritually he is worthy of you — when he has willingly and joyfully passed through the crucible, and

purged his soul of all selfish and ignoble thoughts and desires — sometime, in the sometime that will be eternal, Ladd shall utter that magic word, and loyal and true to the end (to the beginning, rather, for it shall be the beginning for us) my Ain Lassie will respond, and our happiness will be all the more complete because of the loneliness and the waitings we must now needs accept.

But a few moments ago I returned from a quiet stroll around the shoulder of the mountain. I chanced upon an old, uninviting shack, tottering to ruin. Some quaint Scotchman must have lived there; for, over the front door, in letters carved from the bark of trees, were the words: "Bide a Wee!"

Bide a Wee! That invitation burned into my memory. The words seemed a command from heaven — a message of consolation to strengthen us in our present trial. Bide a Wee! Like the old shack, our prospects in the immediate future are somewhat uninviting, yet bide a wee, Claire, till the Master points out the trail, and we journey along it together.

Lovingly,
Ladd.

John has just returned with King Albert, not of the Belgians, but of the McDonnells. Preparations though were the same, and the welcome just as wholehearted as if in truth his majesty, King Albert, had arrived. Nothing was omitted which loyal hearts could devise. I've been presented. More later.

Sunset Cottage,
Bear Paw Mts.,

July 25, 1918.

You recall the scene, Claire: the dimly lighted dormitory; the boys, of all sorts and sizes, preparing for bed; little Arthur pausing awhile by his bedside to render thanks to the Maker for preserving him during the day; the contemptuous glances of the bully, and his dastardly act of throwing a shoe at the kneeling figure; the look of utter amazement in the face of Arthur's champion, Tom Brown; then that glorious act of chivalry in shying his own shoe at the coward, and his ringing challenge to the whole student body: "If anyone wants the other shoe, he knows how to get it!"; finally after the lights were out, those long hours of introspection and bitter self-accusations as Tom reviewed his own blameworthy conduct in the light of the newcomer's courage; and, at last, his generous resolve to conquer all human respect, and kneel down next morning before his companions, and, indifferent to their sneers of contempt or glances of approbation, to return to the custom his own dear mother had begged him never to omit, of spending a few moments on his knees every morning and evening to pay his respects to the Creator of all; then the reward:

"And Tom Brown went down to the study hall that morning with the glimmer of another lesson in his heart — the lesson that he who conquers his own coward

spirit does more than he who conquers the whole, outward world."

As a boy I thought I should never forget that realistic picture painted by the old Master of Rugby. But I did —I did; until last evening, when it returned, very unexpectedly and very distinctly.

Two nights ago, for the first time, Albert slept on the porch. I noticed the little fellow remained quite a time on his knees beside the low cot but recently purchased for him. Fearing he would contract a cold, I rather summarily remarked: "Albert, jump into bed at once!"

He obeyed; but rather reluctantly, I fancied. Moreover, the following day he was quite distant, avoiding me whenever he possibly could, and answering my questions only in monosyllables. The situation was puzzling. This was not the frank, guileless Albert I had known and conversed with familiarly, but an entirely new individual, distrustful, and rather slow in forgiving a supposed slight.

Why the change? Very simple — that little Tom Brown incident on the veranda accounts for everything.

Most children, and especially cripples, are very sensitive. I might add too, very sincere. My words to Albert were ill-timed — I should have waited until he had finished his prayers. Then also, my example. Recollect, Claire, that, each night on retiring Albert witnessed his companions, kneeling for a moment with joined hands in prayer to God. As far back as he could remember, both he and his young associates never had omitted this practice — it was part and parcel of their very being. Never,

therefore, did it enter into his honest little heart to suspect the existence of an individual, or class of individuals, who constantly neglected this simple act. Not alone my words, but my conduct especially was a revelation — a shock to him. I must indeed be "a real bad man," an atheist, a person to be shunned at all costs; or, perhaps, a brand to be rescued from the fire, one for whom he should pray.

I am inclined to think that this last role made the strongest appeal to Albert. Being a gentle lad, I fancy he was averse to the prospect of having to satisfy his conscience at the price of being distant and rude to me. And, hence, he determined gradually to drop all external manifestation of displeasure toward me, and to turn his energy to petitioning for the salvation of my soul.

Anyway, last night he began the attack. This morning I am very much disposed to concede that he attained his objective.

It was later than usual when he stole out onto the porch, a white-robed, angelic, little figure, and straightway limped to his cot, and knelt down beside it.

Knowing the boy to have resented my intrusion of the evening before, I waited a short time, then remarked: "Albert dear, you must not kneel on the porch in your bare feet."

No word in reply.

Once again, this time curtly:

"Into bed, Albert! Otherwise I may be obliged to inform Mrs. McDonnell of your conduct."

For some moments more no sound was heard. Then silence gave place to a low sob, and, before I realized it, the little fellow was crying as if his heart would break.

I quickly arose, donned my bathrobe, and going over put my arms about him. But no! he would have none of me, and continued to cry, calling piteously between his sobs for "Mother" (Mrs. McDonnell). I finally deemed it advisable to awake her; and (would you believe it, Claire?) it was only after Nurse had administered an opiate, and had stayed by his bed two or three hours that he at last dozed off into a troubled sleep.

His sensitive nature, the excitement of the journey, his new surroundings, and the little incident of the night previous (which somehow he could not dismiss from his thoughts, as he mentioned it continually to his new-found mother during the day) — this last then, combined, perhaps, with the other circumstances, had proved too much for our beloved Tiny Tim — the bright, young cripple, who had at last found a home in the far-off mountains of the Bear Paw.

"But sleep seemed to have deserted the pillow of poor Tom."

I never fully sympathized with Tom before. I do now. I can calculate to a nicety just what agonies of remorse he went through that night in the dormitory from what I experienced last night on McDonnell's porch.

It's rather interesting to reflect what a change time will bring about in one's viewpoint of life. A year ago

I was quite well satisfied as to my relations with God, or, rather — to be more correct — I was so well satisfied with myself and with my achievements as to have no time to waste on considerations (to me, of small importance) of my dependence upon a Superior Being. He, as far as I was concerned, was out of the reckoning. These months of forced inactivity, however, have accentuated the claims of the Almighty. Yet it remained for a little child to bring the realization of them home to me.

A little child, Claire, doubtlessly sent to me, as was the Divine Child to the Bethlehemites, to impress personally upon my unthinking soul the absolute necessity of living out those essential relations practically in my daily life. Albert revealed to me last night what a cad I have been, and so, after seriously resolving once more to begin anew, it was to Albert I went to humble myself. I told the lad that, before going out on the porch, he and I would say our prayers together each night. You should have witnessed the look of genuine happiness that spread over his countenance, Claire!

I wonder what would become of this world were it not for the faces of little children — faces that, like crystal, reflect the spotless souls within, and recall to our minds the criterion the Master set for us — the criterion to which all of us, no matter how advanced in age we be, must strive to conform: "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kindom of Heaven."

For you see, Claire, children's eyes look up to us on

their way to God, and, plainly, we must banish all selfish, base thoughts from our souls in order duly to perform the sacred office of ministering to innocence.

Affectionately,
Ladd.

July 28, 1918.

Rain——! Rain——! Rain——! The mountain sides are hidden under a dull-gray coat of falling water. Beaver Creek has suddenly grown into a ruthless giant, and, roaring mightily, pursues his course, heedless of everything in the way. The thunder echoes and re-echoes across the canyon. The fitful lightning momentarily brightens the wild, bleak scene. Even placid Rory is disturbed — he sinuously creeps up to me as I sit before the hearth, begging in his dumb way for protection from the elements without.

Albert, who, until a few moments ago, had been deeply engrossed in a fairy tale, returns from peering through the nebulous windows, and once more resumes his book and his place by my side.

The "pilgrim," with a "fag" as companion, is occupied in watching the bright-red flame before him, when — lo! an unusual chirp is heard. I look down, and spy a little cricket hopping between Albert's chair and mine. The cricket on the hearth, Claire! Tell me, quaint black harbinger of future peace and happiness, tell me what does your visit signify? What invisible cord are you weaving between Albert's life and mine? What

hidden link are you quietly forging between his career and the "pilgrim's"?

I am more anxious than you perhaps fancy to have the above question solved; for, in some vague way, I am convinced that yonder lad's future is to be intimately associated with my own.

Claire — you who arrayed becomingly in gray could stimulate knowledge of the future to the complete satisfaction of your guests — can you not look into my cup tonight and solve this riddle?

Please, stop laughing! And yet I'm amused myself — I'm amused at my own seriousness.

Always take for granted my greetings to your mother — I'm inclined to forget everybody except YOU when writing.

Lovingly,

Ladd.

FROM CLAIRE TO LADDIE

July 15, 1918.

My Ain Laddie,

We hear of men who give up their lives in battle with a smile. Is life, then, more than all that makes life worth the living — happiness, companionship, love? You say that you cannot write the word that will take me to you — and even as you write them, the words in your letter seem to smile a little; for you will always,

". . . journey along in the lilt of a song." But between the lines there isn't a smile. Ah, Laddie mine, you have called me a gift of God. Shall mere man reject what God so freely offers? Oh, I suppose it is unwomanly to force the issue — but after all, is a day's happiness any less thrillingly sweet than that of a long life through? I promise, of course, that I shall await your word, but, Laddie, think — "Home — and a light shining through the darkness — Claire."

. . . I've just read what I've written, and I know I ought to tear it up — but I won't.

When you are spiritually worthy of me! Ladd, do you think I can allow you to say such things? It is when I think of the divine fire that has been kindled from that "vital spark of heavenly flame" within your house of clay — oh, then I tremble at its consuming power. And even while I smile, when your words smile,

my heart seems breaking at the tears that arise between the lines. Don't say it again, Laddie — it is only the thought of that pure white flame which holds me back; lest I should, all unwittingly, arrest the Master's work and quench that fire which I'd give my life rather than destroy. It is only that fear which keeps me from writing the words, "I'm coming."

I mustn't go on this way. If my last letter caused you to suffer, what will this do? and yet, I'm sending it. Is Claire growing cruel?

Remember that all your statements about the unfairness of one's pulling a load meant for two, I count as naught. When the summons does come — and you say it may come sooner than I suspect — I shall take wing with the unerring instinct of a homing pigeon, straight for the Bear Paw — and you.

That's all. The surgeon is finished for this time, Laddie, and I'm sorry to have to probe. But do you know, there seems a greater Surgeon in this case, who guides the knife; and the one who seems to be cutting is as wax in His Hands; so count the pain as coming not from Claire — promise me that — for, left to myself, I should plant a hedge of thornless roses around the two of us. Strange to say, though, I can find no thornless roses on the steep trail to the fair and far Countree. I think there aren't any.

We may go to California after this Lake sojourn is ended. Needless to say, no word of mine will hasten our departure . . . for are not the Bear Paw nearer, and the violet haze of those shining mountains closer, and does

not the afterglow from the vast northern prairies steal in some vague and indefinable way into my heart, while I am here?

Ladd, I'm afraid I'm growing moody — such a minor strain this letter takes, when it ought to be all brightness, joy, and laughter, in anticipation of that time which may come "sooner, perchance, than you may suspect." Delay is not forever; and I *am* happy, Ladd, for I know that love like ours is above the accidents of time and place. And in a little while. . . .

You know, Bob always says that all things come to him who waits — if he waits in the right place. So let's just wait! We'll take the words over the old Scotchman's door to ourselves and "Bide a Wee!"

My humble obeisance to the new sovereign of the McDonnell home, and, I begin to suspect, of the heart of Ladd, too. I am awaiting a detailed account of the presentation ceremony. Hail to King Albert!

Your own Claire.

July 30, 1918.

Do you remember, Ladd, how you used to say that life becomes very enjoyable, not to say amusing, when we look upon it with what one might call the dramatic instinct. One may himself be the leading actor and make all the other characters play up to him, or as you preferred, seat himself back somewhere out of the way in a corner of the gallery, "watch the show, and laugh at the fool players."

You know, I never would concede that the players were usually "fool players." But of course it is a human failing to find amusement in the doings of the Other Fellow, and think how much more cleverly one could have taken the part himself. That probably accounts, Laddie, for my preference for the gallery corner. There, no one can prove that I couldn't support my assertion.

I used to be unreasonable enough to regret your looking at things that way. It was all just a big and amusing drama to you: the Here and the Hereafter; and I shall never forget the tears of utter stinging happiness I shed when, after you first went up into the Shining Mountain land for story material, the mystic beauty of the great open spaces seemed to alter your viewpoint, so that one of your letters contained this observation:

"The moon is plowing through the fleecy clouds; the Milk River is flowing quietly on to the sea; and God is over all."

Probably you thought nothing of the words, beyond the mere fact that your beauty-loving creature had found a certain satisfaction. But to me, who knew you so well, it marked the beginning of a great change. Then you came back to "civilization" and for a time I feared I had been mistaken. You plunged with all the well-remembered ardor of your being back into the whirlpool of life. Then came your illness; then your exile to the Bear Paw; and now, why Ladd, your soul is fairly beginning to burst its bonds. The Shining Mountains have spoken the language of their Maker to

your heart, and in those hoary fastnesses you are finding yourself face to face with God, and I — am afraid.

This morning, before your letter came (the one that brought back memories of our evenings spent together over "Tom Brown"), I was thinking of your old idea about the dramatic viewpoint of life, and I went off by myself for a little walk, before the others were stirring.

The stage setting, at any rate, could not have been improved upon. There was a crisp, bubbling sparkle in the morning air, like finely chipped ice clinking crystal-clear in thin glasses; there were electric shocks of life, energy, and joy of living, in every breath. To the east, the great sky-curtain was beginning to glow with the flaming daily miracle that men call sunrise. There was even an overture, Ladd, for it seemed as if millions of birds were bursting their little throats in joyous rivalry of song.

Their rippling notes sent the curtain rolling upwards, and the miracle reached its culmination as Lake Superior turned into a dazzling ocean of carmine and gold.

I gasped as the curtain rose — I couldn't help it. Oh, the Scene-Painter! There was a wonder of color, all the brilliance of the sunrise, merging in the shadows into purple, deep green, sage, and gray; and there ecstatically alive, yet superbly calm, reflecting all in its framing depths — the Lake. Surely, a bit of Paradise, a working model of the Green Pastures of God, of the Still Waters, beside which He leadeth us. . . .

Are you smiling, Ladd, at my raptures? I'd not blame you much. But you see, it is your fault, for the fancy

was yours. When I returned, the others were having breakfast, and many were the protestations of surprise over my unprecedented exploit. Imagine Claire's getting up before the sun!

But, Ladd, I think that it has cleared my vision. As I stood there, alone with God, before the wonder of that sunrise, I realized all the things I didn't understand when I wrote that last letter. I shouldn't have sent it. . . . Because now I can see that, in the intimate sense of the Eternal which comes with the contemplation of the works of the Supreme Scene-Painter, one is able to see beyond the curtain even before it rises — on, on, oh, all the way to Heaven! I see it all now, dear, and I am really ready — reconciled to "bide a wee."

After all, it will not be so long, even if we should have to wait until the final curtain drops, and our angels are helping us remove our make-up and the Playwright is waiting to tell us how the performance has gone. Oh, Ladd, we can wait, if it must be

Till Eternity.
Your own Claire.

August 2, 1918.

Ladd, dear,

Isn't it strange that the things we seemed to get along so well without yesterday, when we knew nothing about it, seems today to be vitally necessary to our "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness"?

I'm thinking now of the little orphan, Albert — your

own Tiny Tim — who has taken up his reign in the McDonnell home, and who seems inextricably woven into the warp and woof of the tapestry of your life. When I read the things you write about him, and the effect he has upon you, I wonder if he has not been sent by a Higher Power to help you win the "good fight."

Just think, Ladd, only a few years ago neither you nor I knew that the other existed — and now, there is no thought of mine that does not begin and end with you. Ah, the fatal circle again!

I just can't permit you to malign yourself the way you do, though. It is my private opinion that if Tiny Tim has really been sent to help you along your rough road; you, nonetheless, have been appointed to pull him up a "big little way."

You know it isn't of the slightest use to tell me how your example has been a shock to him — I don't believe it. We all make mistakes at times — otherwise we shouldn't be here yet, should we? And if, as you say, "children's eyes look up to us on their way to God," you must admit that in their simplicity of purpose, they can discern the attempts at reparation on the part of us complex grown-ups with a clearer eye than similar grown-ups would, and will manifest the appreciation due such an attempt.

Oh, Tiny Tim, Tiny Tim, what would a certain young person on the shore of Lake Superior not give to be in your place!

We have overstayed our intended limit of time here, by some weeks, lured by the glories of the great pine

forest, and the sunrises, and the sunsets, and the moonlights on the water; so that it seems as if returning to the work-a-day world outside is a dim and undesired dream. And then, of course, I have that other reason for wanting to stay. I have a strange little feeling that the time which may come "sooner, perchance, than you suspect," must find me here, near and ready to respond to the "come."

It seems all a dream, this waiting, and some day we shall awake and find that we have not been waiting at all. . . .

At Candlelight.

I've gone inside, and put on my gray dress, so that I can look into your future and tell you what the cricket meant. Please, attend, as I put on my most solemn and psychic face and disclose to you the secrets of the future: . . . Things past, present, and to come are an open book to the Princess Claire, seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, born on the banks of the mystic Nile. . . . What would the gentleman? A look into the future? With a touch of the past? — all included in the same price — Ah, there it is. . . . A brilliant career beginning . . . a fine outlook, glowing hopes. But what is that? A shadow . . . a shadow of evil portent. . . . A whirlpool into which he is being sucked. A whirlpool of worldly distractions. . . . But there comes a little ray of light piercing the shadow . . . a light shining through the darkness. . . . It is a woman, who bears a name like

light. . . . She comes into his life and brings happiness . . . but not for long. An illness — the young man is stricken in the flush of youth. His light that shone through the darkness is dimmed by a separation — a long, cruel separation. But the very cruelty of it brings great things to the man . . . things he never could have found had it not come . . . an unveiling of the things above. Another factor in his life . . . a child . . . a little orphan lad. Great good is to come of the association . . . the great good to both. . . . Meanwhile, the light that shone for him through the darkness is beginning to flicker . . . it is losing its identity in the great white gleam that is shining ever stronger and stronger through the veil that is being rent that hides the Light Eternal. . . . The picture fades . . . it fades. . . . It . . . is . . . gone! — Fifty cents, please!

Laugh, Ladd, laugh! Your seeress has done better tonight than ever before, has she not?

Good night! Salute the monarch for me, and tell him that someone else is kneeling alongside of him as you and he say your prayers at night — only he does not see her.

Claire.

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

Sunset Cottage,
Bear Paw Mts.,
August 12, 1918.

Darling Claire,

There was a rather heavy downpour of rain last night, accompanied with thunder and lightning: and today Tiny Tim and I wandered a short distance up Beaver Creek. The storm of yesterday had cleared the atmosphere. The wind swept down from the north, brisk and full of that indefinable, invigorating element so noticeable after a thundershower. Nature had renewed itself — every blade of grass, every leaf seemed pregnant with new vigor. I also noticed two faint, red spots on the pale cheeks of the youngster by my side — nature was busy too renewing human life.

On our way home, a wild canary lisping his ditty from the top of a pine tree claimed our attention. Quite suddenly and unexpectedly Albert drew a sling-shot from his pocket (I had not known he possessed one), and, before I realized what had happened, a helpless fluttering of wings was heard, and the poor little creature fell dead at my feet — struck down in the midst of his song.

Uttering no word of reprimand, I quietly buried him at the foot of the pine tree whereon he had warbled his

last lay, and silently marked the spot by placing a stone over his grave.

During all this time, Albert had stood motionless some distance off. When all was over, the little fellow impetuously threw the sling-shot into Beaver Creek, hurried toward me, and, burying his face in my coat, wept bitterly. No words of his were necessary to inform me that never again would he use a sling.

How often, Claire, by our rash, thoughtless actions do we silence life's songs. How often a word of criticism, a thoughtless remark, a sarcastic retort brings to a premature close the warblings of one who otherwise might have held spellbound the hearts of his fellow men.

Ladd.

August 14, 1918.

Dearest Claire,

There is always something wistful, something extremely pathetic in the face of an old priest — something that moves one to tears in spite of the generous sweet smile that invariably lights up the face. So much goes on behind that smile, so many battles hidden from the world.

We are told that soldiers glory in their wounds and are proud of the marks they have received; yet this old priest we have with us today has not only kept his scars from the eyes of the world, but seems to have convinced even himself that he has never been wounded.

He looks so feeble and haggard, Claire, that you could

scarcely imagine his walking two blocks; but he despises his wounds — he deliberately forgets he is seventy-odd years old, and tramps the prairies or travels on horseback as though he were a man of scarcely forty summers. A pretender? Yes, but of such are the kingdom of Heaven. He is a Napoleon of Rome, a leader in the army of Christ, a man schooled to hardship, mental and physical, and whom privation appears but to stimulate to renewed effort.

I am trying to study him as he sits opposite me (not in a rocker, for he sedulously avoids such luxuries), talking to Mrs. McDonnell, telling her of the little commonplaces that have occurred at the neighbors, for he visits them all, two or three times a year.

In the subdued light from the lamp overhead, his kindly old face seems actually to glow from some burning fire within the soul.

What gentle manners! What courtly ways! — and then that smile, one can never forget it, reflecting, as it does, the wonderful ego within.

An enigma, you say? No, not exactly! Just a simple, saintly old priest; yet in watching him one recalls that there are indeed battles the noise and din of which never reach us; that there are hidden beneath the dancing waves of the ocean more shipwrecks than those which lay strewn along the seashore; that there are griefs which hang no crepe on the door, close no shutters, drop no tears, but modestly retire behind a smile — the smile of those who have learned that "he who loses himself for Christ's sake shall find himself."

That, in last analysis is the cause of this man's strong appeal to me. He is one who has conquered self first, then outside obstacles. And that is why those old fairy tales won our hearts when we were young — they are true to nature. Each one of us, if we wish to keep our ideals, must, like Jack, go forth and conquer the Giant; each one of us must have his Camelot — must ride out and rid the land of all invaders. . . .

I could spend a very profitable evening, Claire, speculating on the life of Father Cruer, opposite, but — there's always a "but" in this life, a little fly in the ointment, no joy is ever unalloyed — well, my speculation came to a sudden stop as I remember my resolve made the night of the "Tom Brown" incident, and reflect that I have now an opportunity to keep my word and return to my Father's House. And Claire . . . I intend to make use of this occasion.

Nevertheless, one is never exactly at ease before an operation, no matter what confidence he may have in the ability of the surgeon. So . . . Claire! . . . do not forget to pray for me.

I'm going out now for a half hour or more to think over a number of unpleasant things in my past life.

Ladd.

August 16, 1918.

On memory's wall hang many pictures. Some are dim with the dust of years, faded, and scarcely recognizable. Others do not appear to be touched by time at all — they

keep their colors, they remain vivid and startlingly clear even to the end of our days.

I'm persuaded that the events of yesterday will be finally relegated to the latter class: — years will never entirely deprive me of them.

Not that these happenings were unusual, not because of any gorgeousness in the settings that surrounded them — no, there was an utter lack of splendor, absolutely nothing to attract one externally. And yet — yet that bare, clean, attic room, the quaint old priest in his robes of white, the two wax candles adding to the supernatural glow of his countenance, the wrapt devotion of the worshipers, the hallowed peace, so powerful that it even seemed a tangible thing — these will haunt my soul when sun and moon have burnt to darkness.

I'm told that converts narrate the great joy, the great happiness they experience on the day of their reception into the true Fold. In the case of the "pilgrim" — the prodigal returned, there was peace and contentment too; and still he was conscious of but one overpowering emotion — regret. Regret that he had superciliously rejected and cast from him a precious Gift, one that would have made his life so much lighter, so much sweeter, so much nobler.

In a lesser degree, I fancy every fair-minded Protestant experiences at times something akin to this withering blight, and sighs for the olden days when the world was one, big religious family, when discord and schism were as yet unknown. Never would they outwardly admit such leaning toward the old Church, yet almost

unconsciously it escapes them. Thackeray's utterance in the Newcomes is (to me) typical of the attitude of many a well-meaning man of today.

"There must be moments, in Rome especially, when every man of friendly heart, who writes himself English and Protestant, must feel a pang at thinking that he and his countrymen are isolated from European Christendom. . . . Of the beautiful parts of the great Mother Church, I believe, among us many people have no idea. . . ."

Who of us — no matter what he be — can deliberately turn away from the central point of Christianity — can shut out the sunshine from his heart, and not be punished by the darkness and cold that inevitably follow? . . . Regret, regret, and, in my case, Claire, regret intensified by the realization that I voluntarily wandered away, yet softened withal, now that I am back, by the sunshine, the new-found delights of Home, as contrasted with the barren wastes and utter aridity of the "far country."

So the day was a memorable one — and the evening no less so; for I enjoyed one of those soul-satisfying prostrating sick-spells which I seem unable to avoid.

I say "enjoyed" because it was a pleasure to suffer something for the sake of the past — more happiness than I ever dreamed it could be.

And then my friends were all so kind and sympathetic. Mrs. McDonnell wore herself out in ministering to me; Albert stole in to see if I desired anything, and, on my replying in the negative, mutely put his arm

about my neck in token of sympathy and comradeship; while on toward midnight, John made a very unsuccessful attempt to tip-toe to my bed — he's too big-hearted and clumsy ever to be a favorite in a drawing-room — and, in his gruff, kind way said: "Here's a letter, Ladd; one of the men brought it in this evening."

It was from you, Claire. The thought of the many favors I had just been receiving, added to the epistolary testimony that my pal had not forgotten me, overcame me and. . . . This brought me relief and after a while I fell into a refreshing slumber.

I'll not tell you any more, except that the day is a glorious one, full of sunshine and gladness; and, oh, Claire, it may be trite, but I'm happy to be alive!

Lovingly,

Ladd.

FROM CLAIRE TO LADDIE

August 18, 1918.

Ladd, dearest,

"The face of an old priest!" Surely, you know how I agree with you about its wistfulness, its pathos, its sanctity. But, Ladd, can you imagine the joy of hearing *you* say it?

I read your letter all through — twice — before the realization of what it really meant came upon me. I've been expecting something of the sort, you know, and yet I had not dared hope that it was to come so soon. After I had finished reading, I sat for a moment looking out in the heart of the sunset, and then, Ladd, you think I wept for joy? No! This joy was too exultant, too bounding for tears. The thing I really did was to fling on my gray cloak and my black beaver hat, and astonish the rest by darting out, with the information that I'd not be back till dark. Then I made straight for a tiny chapel that stands in the midst of a little clearing in the wood (I don't know that I've told you of it. It is served by a decrepit, old, French-Canadian priest). Once there I permitted the ecstasy of my soul to spend itself in union with the joy of our Lord in the tabernacle. . . . For, Laddie, I can imagine the joy of the angels in heaven, this night!

Long before this letter reaches you, your Homecoming will have been completed, and you will be experi-

encing the happiness of resting quietly in the blessed old Faith. I could not help thinking how you said, not long ago, that children's eyes look up to us on the way to God. Now, you know how it feels since as a little child, you have looked up into the serene face of that old priest, on *your* way to God.

I can't believe it! Ladd has returned to his Father's house! Ladd has gone to confession! Ladd, all shriven, and tried in the white-hot flame of mental, physical, and spiritual suffering, has not been found wanting!

There in the dim quiet little chapel in the heart of the great north woods, I knew that I did not deserve such happiness. The little light of the sanctuary, danced and flickered across the altar, and sent its glow over the same Presence that welcomed my Laddie home. . . . One faith, one baptism . . . one God and Father of all. . . .

It was more than nightfall when I returned, and the family "as one man" was beginning to look a bit wrinkled about the forehead, but as Bob said, when one worries about a truant, and then when she turns up as good as new, the prevailing sentiment is to give her a genuine old-fashioned spanking. His eyes twinkled, though, as he said it, and afterwards very carelessly, he inquired what I had heard from Ladd these days. I told them the things they wanted to know, and left untold the great big happening that has made life, death, and the grand forever, a different thing from what it seemed for us a few short weeks ago.

Ladd, isn't it strange that the sorrow of our separa-

tion has been made less to me now that we are so much the more intimately bound together with a tie that men can't see? That is certainly as it should be — though things usually don't turn out just as we fancy they should be. This case is an exception.

It's night, and the lake is breathing in great swelling gasps, and the pines are talking excitedly among themselves, and everything seems strangely stirred up as if something great had happened — and you and I know what it is . . . You and I and Some One, who is enthroned in a rude frame structure in a clearing of the wood, where a lamp like a living ruby burns out its little fire in uninterrupted companionship with the Master of the House. There is peace, and serenity, and joy that knows no end — for the son who was lost has returned.

I wept a little over the bird struck down in the midst of his song — and I wanted to spank your wretched Tiny Tim. Then I happened to think of the grief of his own young heart when he realized the enormity of his offense, and saw the grave disapproval in his idol's eyes . . . and the first thing I knew, I was crying for Tiny Tim.

We are leaving here surely next week — Bob must be off, and so must all the rest of us, on various quests. . . . My own? Well, just now, I am waiting. . . . I wonder what I'm waiting for? I'll write again and tell you about it all.

You ask me to pray for you. If I hadn't been doing that all the time, Laddie mine, where do you think

you'd be now? There, I knew that would drop you back to earth. This letter sounds a bit as if I were growing heavenly, and I hate to have you laboring under a delusion. I'm just happy!

Your scan'lously conceited
Claire.

August 20, 1918.

Oh, Laddie, were you ever on a high peak, with space in front of you, and space on the sides of you, and space in the back of you; when the friendliest place in the universe seemed the little point of earth whereon you stood? I'll admit I haven't been in such a predicament myself, but I can well sympathize with the sensations of a mountain climber in such a case . . . because, I don't want to leave this place. Here I am, with heaven above me, and the only real objective point of my desires a place in the Bear Paw Mountains that wouldn't be so hard to reach from here — and all else in space!

Bob is leaving soon for New York, and Elizabeth and Alice are accompanying him. The girls intend to do war-work, and . . . well, the logical thing for me to do is — likewise. I've made inquiries about my entry into one of the hospitals to train, and find that it will be a matter of six months or a year more, before I could hope to complete any kind of course. That would seem to indicate that another kind of work ought to be mine. So, I suppose the best thing for me would be to return with Alice and Elizabeth. But the magic of the north

woods has cast a spell upon me, which the "Lavender lamps of the avenue" and all the rest of the old lure of old Manhattan seem powerless to break.

The other possibility for me is California — two more remote points from your Bear Paw would be difficult to fancy. A few days more and the decision must be made, and still I wait. . . .

I've just been reading your letter — the one telling of the picture which is to hang on the wall of your memory vivid and clear forever. You make it so real for me, too, that I think I can see it even as you did — the Upper Chamber, and the glorious things that came to you in it, the old priest, the white vestments, the wax candles, and the kneeling ones who love.

But regret? Yes, that's natural, I suppose; and still if you had not the contrast to serve as a background, would your present happiness shine so brightly as it does? For, "Only the darkness brings out the stars," and the star that is shining for you now is the biggest and the brightest that has ever lit up your life, isn't it?

But the news that you are ill! Oh, that is the thought that makes me wonder if I am in the right in acquiescing so mildly to your dictum, you tyrant! I wonder if for me the reproach of the immortal bard has not a deeper message:

> "Our doubts our traitors are
> That makes us lose the good we oft might win
> By fearing to attempt."

I know that your dear McDonnells and the youthful

Albert are kindness itself, but why should they, who have so much beside, have also you?

Later — the same night.

As I was writing, this afternoon, Bob came in with the news that we are to go off up the shore for a sunset picnic, so I had to declare a recess in my letter writing. The blessed boy must have seen that I was looking a bit droopy as to feathers, because after whistling in that absurd little way of his for a few moments, he blurted out:

"If you were thinking of going out to California, why don't you go across the States up north here, and drop off and say hello to Ladd?"

I didn't answer him; how could I? . . . But the idea is attractive. . . . Is there, after all, any law to prevent any young woman of sound mind, from traveling across the continent by any route she might please? Tell me Ladd, is there? . . . I'd like to see a North Dakota twilight again. . . . It is so enchanting, all that space, and so much clear air, and occasionally, or oftener, a tepee in the distance with a campfire near it — just like Indian heaven!

Well, laugh if you must, Laddie. . . . Of course I suppose I can't make a trip out to the McDonnell's ranch in the Bear Paw, without an invitation and a method of getting there. . . . And I'm not thinking even remotely of hinting for such. Still, as Bob says, "Anyhow, let's be cheerful — oh, aggressively cheerful — and look at the funny, if we can't look at the sunny side of things!"

Bob isn't far in the wrong in his advice, is he? And still, Ladd, I think you manage to look at the sunny side, too.

Five more days must see my starting for some other spot of the globe; just what spot, depends a little bit upon you. Anyway, I'll not leave here until I find out what you have to say. I know the Lake is going to miss me, and the woods, and the sunsets, and the moonlights, and the little chapel in the clearing. But partings are the one variety of human experience that falls to the lot of every one of us. How could they be expected to avoid Ladd and

Claire?

FROM LADDIE TO CLAIRE

At Eden,
Bear Paw Mts.,
September 3, 1918.

Dearest,

Albert is experiencing his first real sorrow. He has just been told that in a few short days school will begin. Naturally he is rebellious, at least interiorly. Does not school mean partial separation at least from his companion, Ladd, and from those luring, shady walks through the pines on the uplands? The lessons of the great, wild outdoors are more real to him and more acceptable than all the booklore of ages.

Being young, he hates to surrender, and would rather follow the example of Daffy-Down-Dilly, and escape from pedagogical slavery and that hard old schoolmaster, Mr. Toil. But such is the law. 'Tis useless, Albert, to kick against the goad. Follow the Brahmins. Deck yourself out with schoolbooks (if flowers cannot be had), and march gaily to the sacrifice. Meet that stern old taskmaster, Toil, unflinchingly. Look him straight in the eyes; he's rather a good sort of fellow when all is told.

And Albert — this may make the pill less bitter — I'll take you for a long, long ramble tomorrow.

So in a few days, Claire, the leaves will begin to turn

in school for Albert. Would you believe it? — they are already turning on the mountainside. I am sure some herald from the court of the great king, Autumn, has been along this way; for nature is decking herself in gala attire in anticipation of his coming.

Oh, the colors, Claire! — russet and red and yellow and mauve. It's rather sad to see the leaves put on their gayest garments just before death. Why this useless waste? — "ut quid perditio haec?"

And yet is it all really spent for naught? I like to fancy that even here the Divine Painter is conveying a lesson to us. He desires us to follow nature's viewpoint — to despise death, to rejoice and be glad at its coming. Why, Claire, every tiny leaf scattered on the ground in death seems, paradoxically enough, pregnant with life. It lies there full of expectation — like a bride awaiting the bridegroom.

Even burn them, and the smoke of Autumn leaves ascends to heaven alluringly. It vanishes in the air; but, like the sun, it has disappeared with the promise of a morrow.

So must we gladly meet the grim Reaper who opens the gate to our Home beyond. Eh, Claire?

But you must not fancy the woods hold a monopoly on color.

The sunsets at this time of year just beggar description — they are gorgeous riots of purple, red, and gold. Was it not Coleridge who used cloudland and gorgeous land as synonyms? It is a very true characterization, for there is always an element of grandeur and bigness in

the clouds, and especially is this true when they enshrine an orange-red sun.

Then the dusk, deep lavender and heliotrope! But, O, Claire, the solemn witchery of these western nights! A sapphire background, a clear bright moon of the harvest time, and the star-diamonds so close that one imagines he can reach out and pluck them.

Of course, this feeling of the heaven's being nearer on these September nights is without foundation, entirely subjective. And yet, in a spiritual sense there is considerable truth in it. If the heavens have not reached down toward me: I, nevertheless (let me say it in all humility), have soared from earth since my coming out West. I am once more at Home — once more in Arcady, Claire — in Eden — Eden before the fall.

Sometime or other, in every life, there is enacted the balcony scene. The lovely night when the aspect of heaven and earth seems to breathe peace and tranquility; the gentle zephyr wooing caressingly the groves and carrying off the fragrance of flowers as trophies of his love; Diana with her company of twinkling stars looking down with a soft luster upon a world where so many frenzied passions and warring interests are lulled in repose; the deep blue of a cloudless, ever-arching sky; and then — then the serenade, the whispered words, the plighted troth of Darby and Joan. Yes, sometime or other we all enjoy the balcony scene. Only in my case, owing to the prayers of Claire, it's the Divine Lover who deigns to visit me.

Such peace and soul-content! I would not change

my damaged lung for all the health and all the wealth of Ormus and of Ind. "I have found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him and will not let Him go."

Let me furthermore gratefully state — 'tis always well to pay my debts, to render thanks to those who have loved me while time is yet at my disposal — let me state that, if anything will serve to make the bond that binds us more enduring, it will be the realization on my part of the spiritual indebtedness I owe you.

I spoke of paying my debts awhile ago. In this case I am deeply obliged to you for placing me under an obligation that never in this wide world shall I be able to wipe out. For me this thought holds a peculiar pleasure, Claire. I fancy, too, that the remembrance of the major part you played in the Great Reconciliation, and of the minor, passive role I assumed, will forever keep far from me all promptings to pride and vanity. It will make me more and more diffident of self; and more and more trustful in the goodness of God, and more and more grateful toward a certain little angel in human form whom God sent to my assistance.

May she always continue to help and guide me is the prayer of the Publican.

Ladd.

P.S. Early to bed for me tonight, Claire. Nurse's orders; since Albert and Ladd must be on their way through the pine groves at sunrise. I want it to be a memorable day for the boy in view of the long hours of class that face him in the near future.

Sunset Cottage,
Bear Paw Mts.,
(Via Havre),
September 4, 1918.

To Miss Claire ——,
c/o The Pines,
Le Pere, P. O.,
Wisconsin.

Come. Ladd needs you.
Mrs. J. McDonnell.

September 4, 1918.

Dearest Claire,

I must be brief tonight as Mrs. McDonnell may return at any moment and discover me scribbling.

Our little outing was indeed a memorable one, yet not in the sense I wished it to be. I'm now in bed. The doctor was here not long since and set my leg; while Nurse just left me after anointing my chest and strapping me with cotton and adhesive. She appears rather concerned about my chest, though I tell her that my leg is, at present, the more prolific source of pain.

Please do not scold, Claire! I am sure you would not have wished me to act otherwise than I did.

It all happened suddenly. Even now the whole affair haunts me as something unreal — I scarcely can convince myself that it actually happened.

We left Sunset Cottage quite early, and, after following Beaver Creek for some five miles (in easy stages

because of Albert's poor leg), came upon a fallen tree that spanned the stream at this point. We determined on attempting a crossing. Albert led the way. . . . The pain in my leg is all but unbearable! Well—I broke my leg in carrying Albert from the creek, but managed somehow to reach the bank. The little fellow was then obliged to limp home and announce the disaster. Naturally I became quite chilled while waiting in my wet clothes for help. It was late in the afternoon before John and the hired man reached Sunset Cottage with Ladd on their shoulders.

Good night, Claire!

Ladd.

September 6, 1918.

Claire,

It's pneumonia. Nurse just told me of the telegram she sent you. It is worth a broken leg and a dozen other complications to see your face once more. Don't worry.

Ladd.

CLAIRE TO LADD'S FRIEND, DAVID DORLEY

At McDonnell's in the Bear Paw

My dear Mr. Dorley,

I am taking the first opportunity to give you the details of my last meeting with him we both loved so well. You have already received my message telling you that the "unexpected expected" has come to pass, and that Ladd is dead.

It would be difficult to write calmly to anyone but you, who can understand the answer to the agonized "why?" that is wrung from our hearts. Why, oh why? And yet to Ladd the answer was plain . . . so it must become to the rest of us. Those who do not know will mourn him with an unreasoning grief, and will rebel against the "inexorable fate" that cut him off in the flower of his youth. But we, who have learned something of the lesson of life and a tiny bit of the lesson of death, will realize that his work was done, his life was lived on earth, and that from the only point of view worth holding, his life was a glorious success.

The afternoon of my arrival, I went in to see Ladd at once. . . . Can it be just three days ago? . . . A sunny flash crossed his face at sight of me, but I knew from that moment that his smile was soon to be forever dimmed to earth. We had a precious hour together

before the priest came, and he gave me some messages for you. We did not talk of many things, for that hour was full of a sense of breathless anticipation of the joys to come. I knew, too, that though his love for me was, if possible, deeper than ever before, the one he had been fond of calling his "light shining through the darkness" had lost her brilliance in the far-off radiance of the Light Eternal.

That talk ended quite naturally. Somehow it seemed as if everything had been said, and just at that moment the priest arrived — the good old priest of whom he had written to me at the time of his return to the Church. Then it was that the charm of Ladd's life seemed to reach its summit. His smiling acceptance of pain and death robbed the trial of half its sting to those around him, and not for one instant did the gentle courtesy that was always his relax. Safe within the Fold that had sheltered him in childhood, he went out smiling into the Vast Forever upheld by the tender love of the Good Shepherd. . . .

Mrs. McDonnell is so good. She tells me the things she thinks I want to hear. Dear little Albert — of whom Ladd has told you — is my shadow. They loved him so, just as did all with whom he came in contact. I promised Ladd that I should always try to keep in touch with Albert . . . you see, even in his last hours his thoughts were for those he loved. I can tell you of everything more in detail when I see you.

In a day or two I am going back into the world that has lost him. I should prefer staying here, but I must

go if only to carry my ain Laddie's message to the friends who need him.

Cordially your friend,
Claire.

Afterwards ———
In the empty, silent Bear Paw Mts.

Laddie,

I've just written to David Dorley, as you wished me to, and I told him the things you would wish me to say. He has the details, the story of how your glad, brave soul went out to meet its Maker, and a little of the knowledge of the undying friendship you held for him.

But now, my ain Laddie, just a few moments must be spent with you alone. If this were a week ago, I'd be writing to you, picturing you on the side porch of McDonnell's, smoking a Pall Mall, or rambling with Albert over the hills, and maybe thinking of that day when you would send for me to come.

. . . . . .

That day came. I am here . . . and you are not. My mind cannot take it in, Ladd, for you are so near to me that it seems as if I might look up at any moment and see you looking at me with the dear, half-teasing smile on your lips . . . and then I remember that through all the days of my life I can never look up and see you.

But I must write to you, just once as if you were still here. And even though this great wide world no

longer contains you, I dare hope that you know. Is the gulf between Time and Eternity so black that you can no longer see me? Are the things I do no longer known by you? Or is Claire still a light shining through the darkness between us, shining for you still, though the Light of Eternity now be yours?

I must stop quickly, Laddie mine! . . . Albert just came in with something he had found of yours that he thought would comfort me . . . it was an unopened box of Pall Malls! The things that you had, that you touched, even the splendid body you lived in, are no longer necessary to you — even Claire, save as she can reach your brave spirit. . . . The sight of the Pall Malls has restored my equilibrium. . . . I have strength now, and I will go tomorrow and take your message to those who mourn you. And I can do it, because I know that you are waiting for me beyond the star dust and the stars.

Claire.

By the banks of Beaver Creek.

It rained last night — a soft, silent shower, dampening a new-made grave; yet, strangely enough, refreshing the little nosegay of wild flowers Albert had placed on it. Was this heaven's way of bestowing its meed of sorrow on the dear departed one, and, at the same time, of indicating that Tiny Tim should obtain courage and renewed vigor for the battles of life in the example and heroic death of his friend?

Indeed I hope Ladd's life will be an inspiration to the boy, and Ladd's prayers guard the little "king" in the days to come. . . .

It rained last night; the weather is still cloudy; and there is mist also in my heart. Oh, Ladd! Ladd! why did you leave me just when the better days were dawning — when strength had been restored to you! Why were you taken before you obtained your heart's desire of succeeding in the chosen realm of literature!

Cease. Such a complaint is not only useless but untrue. Ladd did succeed, though he did not obtain what many confuse with success — worldly recognition.

The little stream by which he lived is unknown except to the few surrounding settlers; and still it is a success — it fulfills its mission, it sings its song, it gladdens "each blade on the soft dewy lea," it reaches at last its destiny, the sea.

There is but one Niagara, but many a mountain canyon has its Beaver Creek, and on every hillside is a rippling rill. As much credit is due to the rivulet that sings as to the cataract that roars — neither more nor less. The rivulet has no right to complain, the cataract no right to be proud.

The little stream, though small, can reflect the universe — it can hold the moon and the stars in its bosom just as the broad, deep ocean.

Moreover, Beaver Creek is an epitome of God's way of dealing with His creatures in this world. In the universe as constituted by Him the humble positions are vastly in the majority. We are neither expected nor

asked to do much, but to do a little and to do it well. It is not demanded of us to stamp our characters on a generation, since the strength and the opportunity may not have been given to us; but if we greet the small duties of each coming day with cheerfulness, throw a kindly word to the passer-by, drop a penny in the poor man's hat, keep our lamps well oiled and trimmed in daily expectation of the Bridegroom's coming, the golden touch is ours; for we have been able to transmute the sodden affairs of life into priceless riches.

It is not the smallness of your life, but the quality that is important. Ants are small, yet if each ant carries its little pellet of sand, the ant-hill soon assumes considerable size. It is always so. The obscure makes history when each man does his duty, and human progress is more the result of what takes place in private life than what the giants do.

Historians tell us that only Richard could wield a sword six feet long, but victory in the battle did not depend so much on Richard's sword as on the arrows of his brave yeomen. The world consists of little people each doing his trifling task, but the aggregate influence is something irresistible — a dynamic force that cannot be withstood, just like innumerable little shots welded into one immense cannon ball. . . .

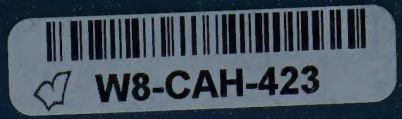
The best men and the best women are unknown. There is a long list of saints who have never been canonized. Their names will not be heard until the Day of Judgment — men who fought hard battles with misfortune amid surroundings too obscure for recognition.

They were never mentioned in dispatches, they were never decorated, but some day the Great Commander will single them out — "Friend, go up higher!"

Farewell, little stream, farewell! A noble heart rests by your banks. Like you he was always giving — he never thought of self but only of others. Like you he sang. The sorrows of life served to bring out the better things in him as the rocks that hamper your course only elicit from you pleasant music. And as you mirror the beauties of Creation, so like you too, he always reflected the nobility, the goodness, the mercy of his Creator.

But now his journey is over. The long-looked-for dash of waves has been heard, and the River at last has met and been absorbed by the Sea.

FINIS.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